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TOMORROW IS TODAY, A STUDY OF VISTA IN URBAN POVERTY. REPORT I, THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS.

BY- CANTOR, MARJORIE H.
COLUMBIA UNIV., NEW YORK, SCH. OF SOCIAL WORK
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VISTA, OR "VOLUNTEERS IN SERVICE TO AMERICAN," IS A PROGRAM ESTABLISHED UNDER THE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 1964 TO DEAL WITH POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES. VOLUNTEERS ARE TRAINED FOR SIX WEEKS AND ASSIGNED TO LOCAL AGENCIES WHO SERVE AS SPONSORS AND PROVIDE SUPERVISION AND INSERVICE TRAINING. A STUDY HAS FOLLOWED 126 VOLUNTEERS, TRAINED IN FIVE CYCLES BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 1965 AND JULY 1966 AT THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK FOR URBAN COMMUNITY ACTION AND ASSIGNED TO 43 URBAN PROJECTS, FROM THE INCEPTION OF THEIR TRAINING THROUGH THEIR YEAR OF VISTA SERVICE. THIS REPORT COVERS THE TRAINING PERIOD AND THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS ON THE JOB. PART I REPRESENTS A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE VOLUNTEERS, THEIR TRAINING AT COLUMBIA, THEIR SPONSORING AGENCIES, AND THEIR LIFE ON THE JOB AND IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS THEY SERVED. PART II IS AN EVALUATION OF TRAINING AND JOB EXPERIENCE BY VOLUNTEERS AND THEIR SUPERVISORS, AS EXPRESSED IN STRUCTURED FIELD INTERVIEWS AND ON RATING SCALES. IMPLICATIONS ARE DRAWN FOR VISTA TRAINING, PLACEMENT, AND ADMINISTRATION. FUTURE REPORTS WILL PRESENT ANALYSES OF 11 ATTITUDINAL AND MOTIVATIONAL TESTS ADMINISTERED TO EACH VOLUNTEER AT THE INCEPTION AND CONCLUSION OF TRAINING AND AFTER FOUR MONTHS OF SERVICE, VOLUNTEER REACTIONS TO THEIR TOTAL EXPERIENCE, AND THE IMPACT OF VARIATIONS ON TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS. (AJ)

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VISTA
RESEARCH REPORT

OFFICE OF RESEARCH,
PLANNING AND EVALUATION

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
VISTA
WASHINGTON D.C. 20506

TOMORROW IS TODAY

A Study of VISTA in Urban Poverty

by
Marjorie H. Cantor

VISTA Research Project
Columbia University School
of Social Work
Center for Research and
Demonstration
July 1967

Report I: The First Four Months

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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The Columbia University School of Social Work | *New York, N.Y. 10028*
TRafalgar 6-6300
2 East 91st Street

July 1967

Dr. Daniel Thursz, Chief Consultant
VISTA
Office of Economic Opportunity
1111 18th Street, N. W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Dr. Thursz:

In accordance with our contract with the Office of Economic Opportunity we are pleased to submit "Tomorrow is Today, A Study of VISTA in Urban Poverty." This is the first in a series of monographs to be issued by the VISTA Research Project of the Columbia University School of Social Work, dealing with various aspects of VISTA in the inner city.

The present report deals with the crucial first four months of 111 VISTA Volunteers trained at Columbia and sent to 43 urban Sponsoring Agencies across the country. Part I discusses in considerable detail the background of the Volunteers, the Sponsoring Agencies, training at Columbia, the experience of the Volunteers in the Agencies and on the job, and their life in the ghettos of the inner city.

Part II presents an evaluation of VISTA assignments by the Volunteers, ratings of Volunteer on-the-job performance by Direct Supervisors, an assessment of training by both Volunteers and Agency staff and a discussion of the impact of the VISTA experience to date on the Volunteers.

The data for this study was collected over a two year period in the course of more than 200 depth interviews held on the project sites with the Volunteers, their Direct Supervisors and the Project Sponsors.

The VISTA Research Study represents, we believe, the first longitudinal study of a sizeable group of VISTA Volunteers. Future reports of the Project will deal with the effect of the VISTA experience on the attitudes of the Volunteers, the influence of Agency factors and background characteristics of Volunteers on VISTA performance and Volunteer satisfaction, and the evaluation of the total VISTA year made by the Study Volunteers upon completion of their VISTA service. An attempt will also be made to chart the effect of VISTA service on the career plans of the sample of Volunteers being followed.

This research would not have been possible without the assistance and cooperation of the VISTA staff in Washington and in the regions. The Sponsoring Agencies and the Volunteers were most generous in giving of their time. Above all they desired to paint as full a picture of urban VISTA as possible within the study design.

We trust that these findings will be of value to VISTA. In the final chapter we have noted some implications of the material from our vantage point and would be only too happy to discuss them further with you and any other members of the VISTA staff. If we can be of further help in the dissemination of the Study findings we would of course be delighted. We would like to thank you for the opportunity of working with you and look forward to a continuing relationship with VISTA in the year to come.

Sincerely,

Marjorie H Cantor

Marjorie H. Cantor, Director
VISTA Research Project
Columbia University School
of Social Work

MHC/amz

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have helped make this research possible. VISTA has from the beginning encouraged and cooperated with our efforts. Particular thanks is extended to Dr. Daniel Thursz, formerly Director of VISTA Research, Planning and Evaluation and presently Chief Consultant, Office of the Director. His valuable advice and help have contributed so greatly to the project's potential. To Mrs. Lily Gold, appreciation, for her ready assistance at all times.

The Columbia University School of Social Work and Dean Fred S. DelliQuadri and former Associate Dean Mitchell S. Ginsberg through their deep interest in VISTA made this research possible.

Dean Samuel F. Finestone, Assistant Dean and Director of the Research and Demonstration Center, of which this project is a part, has been a close advisor and warm friend. His wise guidance has been most encouraging to all involved.

No research project is possible without its staff. From the project's inception, Miss Karen Wager, Senior Research Assistant has been an active collaborator in all phases of the research. Her considerable contributions have been invaluable.

Mrs. Daliah Sommer, Research Assistant, has been most helpful in the analysis of the data and the preparation of this report.

My appreciation to the other members of the research staff, Mrs. Elizabeth Sharpless, Miss Lois Martin, Mrs. Marcia Kreitzer and Mr. Jeffrey Page who have so effectively assisted in various aspects of the research efforts.

Without the tireless effort and continued devotion of the project secretary, Miss Anita Zuber, our work would have been impossible.

Dr. Kenneth Warwick, my colleague at the Research Center gave generously of his time in porgramming our data for the computer. His extensive knowledge and assistance were vital to this study.

The members of the Columbia VISTA Training Staff, Mr. Murray Frank, Project Director, Miss Wilma Klein, Training Director, Mr. Morton Rogers, Field Placement Director and Miss Lora Cohen, Training Placement Officer were from the first most supportive of this research. Through their efforts it was possible to establish close contacts with the VISTA Volunteers and the training program. One of the most gratifying aspects of the VISTA Research Project was the positive working relationship between practice and research.

To the VISTA Volunteers, their Sponsoring Agencies and Direct Supervisors who welcomed our field visits and gave so generously of their time, particular appreciation is expressed.

Marjorie H. Cantor
Director, VISTA Research Project

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PART I

HOW IT LOOKS

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Since the creation of VISTA by Congress in 1964, approximately 4,000 VISTA Volunteers have served the poor in cities, rural areas, on Indian reservations, in Job Corps Camps and in mental institutions. This report is the story of one group of VISTA Volunteers working in urban poverty. The subjects were chosen randomly by VISTA Washington from among the pool of eligible "urban" applicants; sent to the Columbia University School of Social Work for training and assigned to social agencies and institutions located in America's largest cities. Their experiences and the reactions of their Supervisors and Sponsoring Agencies give a comprehensive picture of what it means to be a VISTA Volunteer in the inner city.

In the light of the recent upheavals in the ghettos, the role of the VISTA Volunteer as an effective connecting link between the residents of the ghetto and the outer workd seems particularly germane. As we shall see, this role is difficult to play and requires a special type of training and considerable support from Sponsoring Agencies and VISTA nationally. But above all it involves the enthusiasm and commitment of a group of primarily middle class white young people who choose to leave their protected environments and live among the poor. It is to the courage and devotion of VISTAS everywhere and to the wisdom and integrity of those who train and sustain them in their year of service that this report is dedicated.

Our findings indicate that the VISTA Volunteer is a new kind of assistant to the helping professions with a unique blend of idealism and willingness for hard work. Although not yet extensive in number, VISTA Volunteers have made an impact on the poor and on the agencies with whom they serve. In addition, VISTA service has enlarged the perceptions and horizons of the Volunteers. The impact, in those cases in which it is great, comes from the special relationship the Volunteers are able to establish with clients, from the uniqueness of their role within the Sponsoring Agency and from the sharpness of the experience of living in poverty.

A Brief Overview of VISTA

VISTA, or "Volunteers In Service To America" is one of the Federal anti-poverty programs established by Congress under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Patterned after the Peace Corps, VISTA is concerned with poverty in the United States and is frequently known as the "Domestic Peace Corps." Through VISTA, for the first time in our history, the Federal Government is providing a corps of full-time volunteers to live and work with the poor. Volunteers customarily serve for one year although re-enlistment for an additional year is accepted; at present about 35 per cent of the Volunteers either extend their service for up to 6 months or re-enroll. To join VISTA one must be at least 18 years of age and a resident of the United States. Although VISTA welcomes Volunteers with special skills (e.g., teachers, lawyers, and nurses), there are no specific skill or educational requirements. The main emphasis in VISTA recruitment literature is for people who can communicate and work well with others--

people with a sense of "know-how" who can help others to help themselves.

VISTA Volunteers, however, do not work independently in poverty areas. After 6 weeks of training, Volunteers are assigned to local agencies who serve as their sponsors and provide them with on-going supervision and in-service training. Agencies that receive VISTA Volunteers must have programs that focus on self-help by the poor and that allow the VISTA Volunteer to work directly with the poor. The job of the Volunteer must be so defined that it adds new dimensions to existing programs or initiates service where none previously existed. At the present time there are 399 Sponsoring Agencies in 48 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

There are six main types of VISTA service: in urban poverty areas, in rural poverty areas, with the Indians on reservations, with the migrants, in hospitals and institutions for the mentally ill or retarded, and in Job Corps camps. Volunteers express a preference as to type of service in their original applications and are trained accordingly. At the present time over 40 per cent of all Volunteers are in urban projects, approximately 30 per cent are in rural projects, and the remaining 30 per cent are divided among the other four types of service.

Crucial to the VISTA concept, as to the Peace Corps, is the provision that VISTA Volunteers live, whenever possible, with the poor in the neighborhoods in which they serve. So that they may afford essential living and personal expenses, VISTA Volunteers receive a minimal monthly allowance (this allowance varies from locale to locale and in urban poverty areas usually runs from $140 to $240 per month). In addition, VISTA provides free medical service and puts away $50 per month of service for each Volunteer to be paid in a lump sum at the end of his VISTA year.

The VISTA Research Study

Background

At the request of VISTA Washington, the Center for Research and Demonstration of the Columbia University School of Social Work has been conducting the first longitudinal study of a sizeable group of VISTA Volunteers. Over the last two years, one hundred and twenty-six Volunteers, trained at the School for urban community action and assigned to 43 urban projects, have been followed from the inception of their year of training through their year of VISTA service. The present report covers the period of training and the crucial first four months on the job. Future reports will present Volunteer reactions to their total experience as detailed at the end of service.

Research Design

The VISTA Research Study came into existence in August 1965 at the time of the establishment of a Training Center for VISTA Volunteers at the Columbia University School of Social Work. The primary purpose at its inception was the evaluation of the impact of various experimental training designs upon VISTA Volunteer performance in the field. Upon consultation with VISTA Washington, and in view of the paucity of data about VISTA Volunteers, the purpose was expanded to include a comprehensive picture of other aspects of VISTA of interest to Washington and the helping professions. Included in this broadened scope were the jobs performed by urban VISTA Volunteers, the types of relationships established with clients, the relationship of the VISTAS to the agency and Supervisors, areas in which VISTA Volunteers are particularly effective vis-a-vis other agency staff and limitations in their effectiveness and problems of adjustment and field support.

The research design of the Project provided for the following data collection procedures:

1. Three waves of an attitudinal and motivational battery (adapted from the battery used nationally by VISTA) to be administered to each Volunteer in the study population at the inception and conclusion of training and after four months of VISTA service in the field.
2. All Volunteers to be visited on their jobs at the end of four months and an extensive two hour structure interview held with them.
3. The Direct Supervisors of all Volunteers to be similarly interviewed. In addition each Supervisor to complete a performance appraisal of the Volunteer on a rating instrument developed by the VISTA Research Project.
4. Wherever possible the head of the Sponsoring Agency or the person responsible for all VISTAS in the agency was to be interviewed.
5. Each Volunteer to complete an end-of-service questionnaire at the end of one year of service.

Attitudinal Change

Eleven standard attitude scales are included in the battery given three times to the Volunteers, measuring such attitude regions as political and economic conservatism, democracy, tolerance and anomie.

The study hypothesizes that effective training will be reflected in positive attitudinal change, but that the most substantial change will occur as a result of the VISTA experience in the field.

At the present time, scores on the eleven scales and a number of selected items have been completed for all Volunteers and comparisons of the three test waves are underway. A report on this phase of the VISTA Research Project is projected for early winter of this year.

Training Evaluation

As originally proposed, an important emphasis of the VISTA Research Project is the training of VISTA Volunteers. During the period September 1965 to July 1966, five cycles of Volunteers were trained at the Columbia University School of Social Work. The 126 Volunteers trained during this period are the subjects of the study and the five training cycles have been examined in detail.

It is hypothesized that effective training will be reflected in both attitudinal change and in a moderately high level of VISTA performance as evaluated by the Direct Supervisors of the Volunteers.

The present report presents the findings on training for the Columbia Training Program as a whole, with the five cycles combined into a single training group. Although the basic framework of training and the staff and orientation remained constant throughout the five cycles, some variation in training design and techniques were instituted; it was possible to roughly deliniate three training models. A subsequent report will evaluate the impact of these variations on attitude change and performance. The findings for the Program as a whole will serve as guidelines for such measurement.

Field Performance

The present report presents in detail the results of the field interviews with Volunteers and Supervisors in a descriptive manner. Lack of time has prevented cross-analysis of the material according to type of agency, type of job, background characteristics of the Volunteer, etc. Future reports will present such an analysis.

The present findings offer comprehensive and vitally needed baseline data about the functioning of VISTA in urban poverty. Rather than wait for the completion of the cross data analysis, we therefore present our findings, to date, in the present volume.

The Present Report

The report is divided into two parts. Part I represents a descriptive study of the Volunteers, their training at Columbia, the Sponsoring Agencies to which they were assigned, their life on the job and their experience living in the neighborhood. Part II is an evaluation of this training and job experience by the Volunteers and their Direct Supervisors (who were most familiar with their work). The performance of the Volunteers is analyzed and implications from the data are drawn for VISTA Training, Placement and Administration.

Training at Columbia

Background

In February and March of 1965 the Columbia University School of Social Work trained an initial group of VISTA Volunteers on an experimental basis. Based upon the learnings from this program, the School submitted a proposal for a training center for VISTA Volunteers. This proposal provided for a 12 month training program made up of six individual training cycles. Each training session was to consist of the basic format found to be effective during the experimental program--a format combining a heavy dose of practical field experience with group discussion, individual instruction, lecture and workshops providing the VISTA Volunteer with the skills and understanding he will require on his work assignment. Although the basic framework and training philosophy were to remain constant throughout the six cycles, some modifications in training design and techniques were to be introduced and the validity of these new approaches evaluated.

Based upon this proposal, a Training Center was subsequently established at the Columbia University School of Social Work.

Our present study encompasses five of the seven training cycles held at the Columbia Training Center from September 1965 to July 1966. Throughout this report the term Columbia Training Program will be used to signify these five training cycles.

The training staff was informed that the graduating Volunteers would be placed in community action programs in the larger urban areas, but neither the exact nature of the agencies nor the specific VISTA assignments were known in advance of training. As a result, a generic training plan was designed incorporating the knowledge, skill and attitudes considered most germane to effective functioning in the helping role in urban poverty.

Goals and Objectives of Columbia Training Program

The Columbia Training Program was dedicated to graduating VISTA Volunteers possessing a conceptual understanding of their role as well as an ability to perform the specific tasks important to their VISTA assignments.

Given young, inexperienced trainees mainly from middle class backgrounds, the staff perceived the major training focus as enabling trainees to:

> --develop an understanding of the sociological, economic and cultural aspects of poverty in the United States, including basic causation as related to social forces in the community.
>
> --develop a compassionate appreciation of the problems and needs of people struggling to live on inadequate incomes and the skills of working with low income people so that some of their problems can be appropriately addressed.

--develop skills and understandings to assist agencies and institutions serving the low income urban community.

The specific program objectives were further elaborated in the original proposal and in a subsequent Manual for Fieldwork Agencies to include the development of knowledge, skills and appropriate attitudes in the following areas.

a) Knowledge of the philosophy, purposes and principles of working with people as individuals, in groups and as members of communities.

b) Understanding of individual behavior, personality growth and development in the context of the cultural, racial and economic environment and how these factors affect people.

c) An understanding of personal attitudes and how these affect the trainees' ability to function in the helping role.

d) Specific skills in working with individuals, groups and communities.[1]

e) An understanding of Voluntarism and its potential contribution to community life.

f) An understanding of the place of voluntary and governmental agencies and programs and their interrelationships.

It was also hoped that each trainee, in fieldwork, would become thoroughly acquainted with the social agency in which he was placed, its philosophy, program of services, policies and procedures. Such exposure would help develop an appreciation of the positive role of agency or institution in helping the urban poor solve the problems of poverty.

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[1] Among the skills mentioned specifically were interviewing, group leadership, conducting simple surveys, talking to clients and discovering their problems, organizing one's own work schedule and working with others. But the most important ability to be stressed was how to relate warmly and helpfully to people.

Structure and Staffing

All five cycles ran about six weeks. Because of time limitation, the training schedule was intense and included evening sessions and Saturday workshops.

A core staff of four remained constant throughout the training program--the Project Director, Training Officer, Field Placement Officer and Training Placement Officer. This core staff, together with a Training Officer from VISTA Washington, carried the responsibility for the planning and execution of each cycle. In addition, faculty members of the Columbia University School of Social Work and other social welfare experts participated on a part-time basis as discussion leaders and lecturers. In fieldwork, the supervisory function was usually carried by a member of the fieldwork agency staff. Thus although the full-time core staff provided the most consistent trainee support and served as the principal role models, the trainees were exposed to a variety of social welfare personnel and points of view.

Throughout the program, trainees lived together as a group in a residential hotel on Manhattan's upper West Side. The hotel was neither affluent nor run down, but could be described as generally respectable. This arrangement helped build a cohesive group feeling among the trainees. Trainees received an expense allowance, and usually provided their own meals.

Format of Training

Training was basically divided into two-components--- practical (fieldwork) and didactic (lectures and discussions).

Fieldwork

Fieldwork took from half to two-thirds of the training time and was aimed at exposing trainees to the reality of agency, community and poor. In fieldwork trainees were presented with real life situations through which to acquire knowledge and test out their own capabilities and limitations. It was hypothesized that a heavy dose of learning by doing would not only contribute to understanding, but would provide a sense of confidence needed in the difficult life of a VISTA Volunteer in urban poverty.

The trainee was assigned to one social welfare agency throughout training and spent anywhere from 27 to 38 hours per week at this agency. Each trainee was given tasks allowing him to learn the steps to be taken in discovering and solving clients' problems, acquiring primary skills of working with people and adapting to his role as a worker. The fieldwork supervisor guided the trainee throughout and each trainee received at least one hour of formal individual supervision per week.

Approximately 15 social agencies involved directly with the poor participated in the fieldwork training of the VISTA Volunteers. These included settlement houses, community centers in housing projects, hospital and health serving agencies, community action and neighborhood development programs, a municipal urban renewal agency and the Department of Welfare.

Reports from trainees about fieldwork indicate that the most frequently performed tasks included gathering information on neighborhood conditions and problems faced by residents (particularly in housing), helping to organize meetings, interviewing, intervening on behalf of an assigned client, recruiting for agency programs and accompanying agency staff to meetings.

Didactic Component

The didactic component included discussion groups, workshops on skills and lectures on social theories of how to help the poor.

Discussion groups met twice a week for two hour sessions with a trained discussion leader (usually a faculty member of the School). About 10-15 trainees were in each group and the composition remained stable throughout the cycle. The main purpose of the discussion groups was to integrate the lecture and fieldwork learnings and give trainees a chance to reflect and explore ideas more deeply in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere. The group interaction was also useful as an illustration of the functioning of small groups. In addition to clarifying ideas, discussion groups often served as a place for trainees to let off steam.

Classroom sessions included lectures and discussions on the characteristics and needs of the poor, lectures and discussions on community resources and sessions on interviewing, leading a group, etc. Ten to twenty per cent of training time was devoted to those sessions. Participants included core staff, persons outside the program, fieldwork supervisors, and faculty members.

Lectures on social theories of how to help the poor included approaches from the radical to the traditional. Faculty, members of city and private agencies, grass roots organizations and OEO-sponsored programs participated.

For a typical weekly training schedule of the VISTA Training Program at the Columbia University School of Social Work see the following page.

TYPICAL VISTA WEEKLY TRAINING SCHEDULE

Columbia University School of Social Work - 1965-1966

MONTH: MARCH-APRIL

2nd Week

HOUR	MONDAY 28	TUESDAY 29	WEDNESDAY 30	THURSDAY 31	FRIDAY 1	SATURDAY 2
9-11	Cage Town Meeting	FIELD WORK	Workshop, "Community Organization". How local groups get formed, role of volunteer etc.	FIELD WORK	Administration FIELD WORK	Skills Workshop: Programming through the use of Games and Visual Aides. What activities and projects are useful for a variety of age levels.
11-1	Workshop with VISTA Volunteers from the field		Program Committee FIELD WORK			
1-2						
2-4	Current Thinking Workshop: Two Approaches: Social Change and Direct Service					
4-6	Discussion Groups					
6-7:30				Immunizations		
7:30-9:30		VISTA Night		Discussion Groups	Dinner with Community Family	

Message of Training[1]

Although many individuals were involved in the Columbia Training Program certain normative messages were dominant and consistent throughout all five cycles.

The Helper Role

The role of the VISTA Volunteer as a helper within the social agency framework was stressed. The helping role was presented as taking several forms--giving direct service within existing agency structure, acting as a referral agent or bridge between the people and available services, acting as an agent of social change and functioning as a teaching role model. Although all four forms of helping were comprehensively covered, agent of social change was probably the most highly valued by staff and trainees alike. Some of the most exciting sessions and speakers dealt with the VISTA Volunteer as a catalyst for social action and several of the fieldwork placements concentrated heavily on involving the trainees in community organization. In the later training cycles, an attempt was made to increase the stress on the value of service.

Relationship to Agency

Although VISTA Volunteers were sent to work within an agency framework they were not pictured as identical with agency staff. They served a somewhat broader role by being in constant contact with the poor and communicating unmet needs of the community to the agency. In addition, they were portrayed as a potential agency gadfly, bringing fresh ideas about ways of doing things and goading the agency into giving more or better service.

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[1] In several of the cycles participant observers recorded the training message given by various staff and in the agencies. The message as presented herein, is based on their observations.

Social agencies were pictured as possessing faults but attempting to do an effective job. Trainees were told to work through agency channels rather than take matters in their own hands for the support of the agency was necessary for them to accomplish their jobs.

Social Change

The dominant theme with respect to social change was that social change was a slow process within the system. VISTA Volunteers were bound by their agencies and by their relationship to the Federal Government. The core staff, representatives from VISTA Washington and the agencies tried to convey that it is difficult to change ingrown patterns of life and that change may come in small steps.

Working with People

In working with people, trainees were cautioned not to impose their own ideas upon the people but to listen to them in order to ascertain community needs. It was important to involve the poor in programs and not make decisions for them. Rather, it was the job of the VISTA Volunteer to alert them to alternatives and attempt to develop indigenous leadership.

Trainees were told that VISTA Volunteers, in relating to the poor, must above all be sensitive to the culture, traditions, mores and behavior patterns of the ethnic and racial groups in the communities in which they work. Common stereotypes about the poor (i.e. they don't care about their children) were explored and the trainees were cautioned about the possibility of temporary culture shock as they moved into poverty ghettos. The difficulty of the VISTA job was stressed with particular emphasis on how the cyclical nature of poverty caused apathy and distrust among many poor people.

Living in the Neighborhood

A somewhat underplayed and confused message was presented in training with respect to living in the neighborhood and the integration of the Volunteer into the life of the community. The extent of the Volunteer's commitment over and above his agency job was never really clarified. VISTA Washington and the staff tended to stress that VISTA Volunteers were on duty 24 hours per day. But the VISTA Volunteers from the field tended to contradict this picture and some even said that they worked from 9 to 5 and kept their evenings and weekends for themselves. Since the staff had little first hand knowledge about VISTA life in the community, they were hampered in their attempts to discuss questions of fear, anxiety and ways of socializing with the poor, particularly minority groups. Everyone, however, warned the trainees that they would be under the watch of the community at all times and that their behavior off the job had important implications for their ability to help people and for their agency as well.

Supportive Atmosphere of Training

In conditioning middle class young people for the rigors of urban poverty there are several approaches to the question of proper atmosphere for productive learning. Some people advocate making training a difficult personal experience for the trainee and thereby simulating the realities of the VISTA life. Another school, approaching learning from a developmental point of view, maintains that if sufficient support and close sustinance is provided in the crucial learning periods, the trainee will have the necessary sense of self and security to more effectively face the rigors ahead. Although the Columbia staff attempted to verbally present the realities of VISTA life to the extent to which they were familiar with them, they tended to offer trainees a warm, supportive, and to a large extent, protective environment in which to learn. As noted, Volunteers lived together in a residential hotel. Although there were sometimes six in a suite, conditions hardly approximated poverty environments. Thus the trainees could get immersed in poverty during field work, but there was also a chance to get away and return to college dormitory conditions where one could reflect and get a breather from culture shock.

At the same time staff were always available for personal counselling and emergency help. Most trainees were seen in two supportive sessions by the Training Placement Officer, a trained psychiatric social worker. Time was specifically built into the program for staff-trainee socialization, for trainee "bull sessions" and even visits around New York. Another important supportive, as well as learning feature, were the biweekly discussion groups. Discussion leaders were urged to, and did establish close relationships with group members.

The Columbia training staff felt that as role models of the helping process, the way they invested themselves vis-a-vis the trainee was crucial. If each trainee could be helped to have a positive learning experience in training, he would not only learn more, but in turn be more likely to give of himself to his clients.

The Study Population

Training Phase

During the 10 month period, September 1965 to July 1966, a total of 168 persons were referred by VISTA to the Columbia University School of Social Work for training as urban VISTA Volunteers. The trainees were assigned to five training cycles known respectively as Columbia III, IV, V, VI, and VII.

Not all persons referred for training became VISTA Volunteers; 17 trainees voluntarily resigned or were terminated during the course of training and 25 persons were "deselected" at the end of training by the Final Selection Board. Thus, from the original group of 168, a total of 126 persons were inducted into VISTA and referred to Sponsoring Agencies for placement. This group of 126--59 men and 67 women--comprises the original population of our study.

The numbers of trainees referred to Columbia, completing training, and eventually selected as Volunteers shown by training cycle is as follows:

TABLE 1 - Numbers of Volunteers Referred for Training, Trained, and Selected by Training Cycle

Training Cycle	Dates of Training	Referred for Training	Completed Training		Selected	
		N	N	Per Cent of Volunteers Referred	N	Per Cent of Volunteers Trained
III	9/8/65- 10/20/65	31[1]	27	87.1	22	81.5
IV	11/17/65- 12/11/65	35	34	97.1	29[2]	85.3
V	1/17/66- 3/5/66	36	35	97.2	29[2]	82.9
VI	3/20/66- 4/29/66	33	25	75.8	19	76.0
VII	6/14/66- 7/22/66	33	30	90.9	27	90.0
TOTAL		168	151	89.9	126	83.4

[1] This cycle also included five representatives from India observing VISTA and a participant observer from Louisiana State University. Although these people participated in training they were not VISTA applicants in the usual sense and were not followed in this study.

[2] Includes one person deselected by Selection Board and later reinstated upon appeal by VISTA Washington.

Field Phase

In addition to attrition during training and selection, the original study population was further reduced by resignations or terminations in the field before the fourth month of service. A total of 14 Volunteers left during this initial period, and one Volunteer changed placements three times before the time of the interview and was considered ineligible for inclusion in the study. As a result, 111 Volunteers were included in the field phase of the study.

Table 2 shows the original sample by training cycles, the attrition which occurred before the fourth month of service, and the resulting number of Volunteers interviewed in the field:

TABLE 2 - Volunteer Interviews Completed in Field Phase of Study by Training Cycle

Training Cycle	Volunteers Assigned to Sponsoring Agencies	Volunteers Leaving Before 4th Month	Volunteer Interviews Completed
III	22	1	21
IV	29	5	23[1]
V	29	1	28
VI	19	3	16
VII	27	4	23
TOTAL	126	14	111

The research plan called for interviewing Direct Supervisors and VISTA Sponsors as well as VISTA Volunteers. The Volunteers were assigned to a total of 43 agencies. These agencies were all visited, and it was possible to interview 28 Sponsoring Directors.

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[1] One additional Volunteer was excluded from the sample because of too many placement changes before the fourth month.

A total of 77 Direct Supervisors were responsible for the 111 Volunteers. Unfortunately, two Supervisors were ill at the time of the interview and although they completed performance ratings on their Volunteers, they were not personally interviewed. As a result, 75 full scale interviews were held with Direct Supervisors.

The following table recapitulates all respondents interviewed in the second or field phase of the study. These interviews were held after the Volunteer was on the job four months.

TABLE 3 -- Interviews Conducted in Field Phase of Study

Respondent	Number
Volunteers	111
Direct Supervisors	75
Sponsoring Directors	28
Total	214

In summary, during the first or training phase of the study the population consisted of 126 VISTA Volunteers who received training at some point during the ten month period, September 1965 to July 1966.

During the second or field phase of the study, the number of Volunteers interviewed during their fourth month on the job was reduced to 111. Forty-three different Sponsoring Agencies were visited and discussions were also held with 28 Sponsors responsible for the VISTA Volunteers and 75 Direct Supervisors.

CHAPTER II

The Columbia Trained VISTA Volunteers

An Overview

What sort of people are the Volunteers?

A background questionnaire prepared nationally and administered at the end of training elicited a wide variety of information about the Volunteers, their families and their lives during the formative years. (The demographic characteristics of our sample are fairly typical of all VISTA Volunteers.)

First, and perhaps most striking, is the youth of the Volunteers. Ninety per cent are 25 years old or younger, and two-thirds range in age from 20 to 23.

Most Volunteers are white, single and come from middle class or affluent backgrounds. Their fathers hold mainly professional, semiprofessional or managerial positions. While they were growing up their family incomes usually ranged from $6,600 to more than $10,000.

The VISTA Volunteers are mainly college educated. Half have finished college and most of the rest have had some college and expect to return at the end of their VISTA service. However, as a group, they cannot be considered highly trained. The majority are typical of those on the first rung of the American professional ladder--the liberal arts graduate. Even the few who have completed professional training have rarely practiced their professions. For most, VISTA service represents their first experience with the adult job world.

In addition to differing from the poor with whom they work, with respect to class, education and race, most of the Volunteers have not been exposed to large cities and urban poverty prior to coming into VISTA training. Inasmuch as VISTA tends to place Volunteers far from their home locale, most Volunteers serve in parts of the country new to them and in environments radically different from those of their past. It should be clear from the foregoing statements that VISTA Volunteers are not indigenous workers in any sense of the word. In the light of their essentially protected, white, middle class background, the VISTA concept of living in the neighborhood with the poor is essential to any meaningful confrontation between most VISTA Volunteers and the poor.

Sex

Of the 126 Volunteers selected into VISTA service at the end of training, 53% are female and 47% male.[1] The overall proportion of males to females in our sample closely parallels the national picture of VISTA, where females slightly exceed males. A similarly disproportionate number of females to males (58% females to 42% males) is found among a study of first year social work students conducted in 1963 for the Council on Social Work Education.[2] These findings underscore previous research indicating that people-oriented professions such as social work tend to attract more women then men in our present society. We do not have enough data to isolate the impact of the draft on male service in organizations such as VISTA, but it is possible that some reversal of the usual trend may occur.

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[1] In Cycles V and VII, commencing in January and April of 1966, males exceeded females for the first time. No clear explanation is available for this phenomenon, although it may be the beginning of a trend influenced by the draft.

[2] Arnulf M. Pins, Who Chooses Social Work, When and Why?, New York, Council on Social Work Education, 1963.

Age

The vast majority of the Volunteers in our sample are young adults just emerging from adolescence. More than two-thirds (67%) range in age from 20 to 23, and 90% are 25 years of age or younger. Of the remaining ten per cent, those over 25 years of age, six per cent are in the age bracket of 26-59, while four per cent are 60 and over. There are, however, two Volunteers who were over 70.

The following table shows the age distribution of the 126 Columbia trained VISTA Volunteers selected for service. Future reports will compare those selected and those deselected with respect to age and other demographic characteristics.

TABLE 4 - Age Distribution

Age	Number	Per cent
18-19	16	12.7
20-21	47	37.2
22-23	38	30.2
24-25	13	10.3
26-29	2	1.6
30-39	2	1.6
40-49	4	3.2
50-59	..	..
60-69	2	1.6
70 and over	2	1.6
Total	126	100.0

Again, as with respect to sex, the ages of the VISTA Volunteers in our study are in line with the national VISTA picture: a small number of late teenagers (18-19 years), a sprinkling of middle-aged Volunteers and a small group of elderly Volunteers. The overwhelming majority are young adults in their early twenties.

Marital Status and Children

Because of the Volunteers' general youth, most are unmarried. There are only three married couples among the 126 Volunteers (all recently married), while several of the older Volunteers are widowed or divorced. Only four Volunteers have children.

Race

The great majority of the Volunteers are white; there are only nine Negroes (7%) and only one from a Spanish-speaking background. The proportion of Negroes in the study is somewhat under the proportion of Negroes in the general population (11%), or among first year social work students (13%).[1] Six of the nine Negroes are concentrated in Columbia VI, one is in Columbia III and two are in Columbia IV. No explanation is available for the disproportionate number of Negroes in Columbia VI.

Education

The Volunteers in our sample (and nationally) are mainly college educated. More than half of the 126 Columbia trained Volunteers have completed college; an additional 38% have finished at least some college, and most plan to return to school upon completion of their year of service. Only two persons have not completed high school, while eight per cent of the group are high school graduates. Perhaps equally significant, however, the total proportion of graduate students is not larged, only 11%. There is considerable evidence that both VISTA and the Peace Corps are exploratory hiatuses attracting the college student or recent graduate who has not yet made a final career decision.

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[1] Arnulf M. Pins, op. cit.

TABLE 5 -- *Educational Background of Columbia Trained Volunteers*

Years of School	Number	Per Cent
1 to 11 years	2	1.6
12 years (high school)	10	8.1
13 to 15 years	48	38.7
16 years (college)	50	40.3
More than 16 years	14	11.3
Total	124*	100.0

*Data on two Volunteers not available

Most of the Volunteers attended privately endowed institutions and the majority come from large universities rather than small independent colleges. An overwhelming majority were humanities or social sciences majors. Interestingly, a recently published intensive study of a group of Peace Corps volunteers indicates a similar preference for the social sciences and humanities, as well as a similarity of age and educational background.[1]

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[1] Morris Stein, *Volunteers for Peace*, New York, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1966.

National Origin

Of the 123 VISTA Volunteers whose birth place is known, only 5 were not born in the United States. (Three of the foreign-born came from this hemisphere.) The vast majority are native born of second or third generation American families: 85% of the fathers and 88% of the mothers, and about half of the Volunteers' grandparents, were born in the United States. The non-native born parents and/or grandparents came mainly from Western, rather than Eastern, Europe.

Communities from Which Volunteers Came

The VISTA Volunteers in our sample come from all parts of the country and from all sized communities. However, the West, East and Midwest are more highly represented than the South; only ten per cent of the sample indicate the South as their place of birth. Stein describes the same pattern in his group of Peace Corps volunteers; about one-third from the Midwest, one-quarter from the East Coast, another one-third from the Far West, and the remainder from various other parts of the country.[1] The South is under represented in both service organizations.

Religious Preference

The VISTA Volunteers were asked to state their religious preference: 78% noted a choice, but 18% either did not state a preference or did not answer the question. Table 6 compares the stated religious preferences of the Volunteers with the chosen religions of first year social work students and the general population.

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[1] Morris Stein, op. cit.

As in the general population, the largest number of Volunteers is Protestant, followed by Catholics and Jews. The proportion of Protestants, however, is significantly less than that in the population at large. Some of this under representation may be due to the large number of Volunteers who indicate no religious preference. These "no preference" answers are not surprising, since in the VISTA age group there is considerable questioning and even rejection of religion. However, we hypothesize that more Protestants than Jews or Catholics will indicate their doubts by choosing "no preference."

Although the proportion of Catholics in VISTA is in line with that of the general population, the proportion of Jews is significantly higher. VISTA draws heavily from college educated people, and there are proportionately more Jews in college than in the general population. Coupled with this, may be the traditional Jewish orientation towards community service. It is interesting to note that among the first year social work students a similarly higher proportion of Jews is found, while Protestants are under represented, though not quite to the same degree as among the VISTA Volunteers.

See TABLE 6 which follows.

TABLE 6 -- Religious Preference of VISTA Volunteers, First Year Social Work Students, and General Population

Religion	VISTAS	U.S. Population[1]	Social Work Students[2]
Protestant	37.6%	66.2%	56.8%
Catholic	25.6%	25.7%	21.9%
Jewish	11.2%	3.2%	14.3%
Other	4.0%	1.3%	1.2%
No Preference	17.6%	2.7%	5.5%
No Answer	4.0%	0.9%	0.3%

Perhaps of greater significance in understanding the VISTA Volunteers is a measure of their involvement with organized religion. In answers to the question, "How often do you attend church or synagogue?", almost one-third reported they attend regularly (at least once a week). A smaller proportion (19%) attend once or twice a month. But the largest group (51%) attend only sporadically, if at all. (See Table 7). In view of the age and recent college attendance of most of the Volunteers, this low rate of involvement in organized religion is not surprising. However, it indicates that religious affiliation, in a narrow institutional context, is not, among our Volunteers, an important motivating factor for joining VISTA. Their orientation appears to be broadly humanitarian rather than traditionally denominational.

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[1] Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce, Current Population Reports, Population Characteristics, (Series P-20, No. 79) February 1958, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

[2] Arnulf M. Pins, op. cit.

TABLE 7 -- Church Attendance During Last Few Years

Frequency of Attendance	Number	Per cent
Once or more per week	37	30.3
Once or twice per month	23	18.8
Two to three times per year	24	19.7
Two to three times in last two years	20	16.4
Did not attend	18	14.8
Total	122*	100.0

*4 persons did not answer.

Family Background

From what kind of homes do the VISTA Volunteers in our sample come? Occupation, education and income generally are used interchangeably, singly or in combination, to measure socio-economic class. All measures of socio-economic status on which data were obtained show that the VISTA Volunteers come from solid middle class American homes. Parents are relatively educated and most are engaged in managerial, professional, semiprofessional, or clerical and sales occupations. At least 40% reported family incomes of more than $10,000 during their formative years; the prevalent income range among the remainder was $6,600 to $10,000.[1]

The families of the Volunteers are not newcomers to the United States, and tended to remain in one location during the Volunteers' growing-up years. There are few divorces or separations noted among the Volunteers' parents; only five per cent come from broken homes. Many of their parents grew up during the depression, and it is possible that their comparatively high educational level might have been even higher without the depression dislocation. In the main, these families have been upwardly mobile during the past years like the typical white middle class family. Not rich, but comfortably affluent best describes the immediate environment of the largest number of Volunteers in our study. The relatively protected nature of their backgrounds contrasts sharply with the ghetto environment of the big cities in which they have elected to work as VISTA Volunteers.

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[1] In judging the full impact of the income range reported by the Volunteers, it must be remembered that the question concerned family income during the formative years. Because 90% of the Volunteers are 18-25 years old, they grew up during the early 1950's to early 1960's, when incomes of $5,000 to $10,000 were proportionately higher than they are today.

Parents' Education

The VISTA Volunteers tend to come from homes in which both parents are either themselves well-educated or value education highly. Of the fathers, 17% have a graduate education, 21% are college graduates and another 15% attended college for at least one year. Thus, slightly over half have some college training. Almost another quarter are high school graduates, leaving only 25% with less than a high school education. The 1958 United States Census reports that of all adults 25 years and older, some 18% attended college, and only 9% were college graduates or better.

For the mothers, the educational level is slightly lower but still well above national averages. Almost 14% of the mothers were college graduates, ten per cent had been to graduate school, and another 16% had attended some college. Thus, a total of 40% were to some extent college trained. The following table details the educational backgrounds of the parents.

TABLE 8 -- Educational Background of Volunteers' Parents

Years of Schooling	Father Number	Father Per cent	Mother Number	Mother Per cent
1 - 11 years	30	25.0	31	25.4
12 years (high school)	28	23.3	42	34.4
13 - 15 years	17	14.2	19	15.6
16 years (college)	25	20.8	18	14.8
More than 16 years	20	16.7	12	09.8
Total:	120	100.0	122	100.0

It is important, however, to note that a sizeable number of both fathers and mothers did not complete high school (30 fathers and 31 mothers, or approximately one-fourth of each group). This is particularly significant in the light of the Volunteers' high educational attainments; only two Volunteers failed to complete high school and the vast majority either attended or completed college.

It appears that even when parents were not highly educated themselves, education was highly valued and considered an important goal for the children. This data suggest that VISTA appeals not only to children of educated parents, but to upwardly mobile families with high educational aspirations.

Fathers' Occupation

The Volunteers were asked to indicate their fathers' present occupations.[1]

Slightly more than half the Volunteers' fathers are engaged in managerial, professional or semiprofessional occupations. The fathers of another 11% are in clerical or sales occupations. Only 15% are skilled or semi-skilled workers.

When this occupational distribution is compared with the occupation spread of the general population (11% professional, 10% managerial, 21% clerical and sales, 4% farmer, and 53% skilled or unskilled workers),[2] it is clear that a disproportionate number of VISTA Volunteers come from professional and managerial groups, while working class people are very much under represented. When occupation is considered with the educational background and income levels of the parents, the essentially middle to upper class skew of the VISTA population is underscored.

The VISTA Volunteers in our sample come from very similar family backgrounds to those of the Peace Corps volunteers studied by Stein. The Peace Corpsmen's families are described as "primarily middle class." Most of the fathers were either professional or managerial and rather well educated. Forty per cent of the fathers attended or were graduated from college, and an additional 17% attended graduate or professional school. Only one father had no formal education, and the remainder attended or were graduated from high school. The mothers' educational levels were similar to the fathers'.[1]

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[1] Because the group is predominantly young, father's present occupation does not differ greatly from occupation while the Volunteers were growing up. In those cases where the present occupation differed from the occupation during childhood, Volunteers also indicated childhood occupation. A total of 38 Volunteers indicated any change in father's occupation, and this was predominantly from working class to lower middle class occupations.

[2] Department of Labor, Employment and Earnings, Vol. VI, No. 12, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, June 1960), p. 6.

Interestingly, VISTA appears to attract young people from a slightly higher occupational background than does the social work profession. In the study of first year social work students made in 1961, only 19% came from professional backgrounds, as compared with 32% of the VISTA Volunteers in our sample; 27% came from proprietorial or managerial backgrounds, as compared with 20% in our sample; while 32% of the social work students were from working class backgrounds, as compared with only 16% in our sample. This study reports that social workers tend to be drawn from upwardly mobile lower or lower middle class homes.[2] VISTA, according to our sample, appears to draw more heavily from the middle class and upper middle class, with a significantly smaller proportion of working-class homes represented.

In the past, many of these upper middle class young people have gone into business, and professions such as law and medicine, following the occupational patterns of their fathers. A disproportionately small number have chosen the helping professions such as social work, teaching, psychology, etc. It may well be that the VISTA experience will be instrumental in attracting some of these young people into the helping professions, a vocational choice which they ordinarily would not be likely to make.

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[1] Morris Stein, op. cit.

[2] Arnulf M. Pins, op. cit.

TABLE 9 -- Occupations of the Fathers of VISTA Volunteers

	VISTA Volunteers	
Occupation	Number	Per cent
Professional, semiprofessional	40	31.8
Proprietor, manager or official	25	19.9
Clerical, sales and kindred work	13	10.3
Farmer and farm manager	4	3.2
Skilled and semi-skilled worker*	12	9.5
Unskilled**	7	5.6
Deceased, retired, not employed	19	15.0
No answer	6	4.7
Total	126	100.0

*Skilled and semi-skilled includes (1) craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers, (2) operatives and kindred workers and (3) farm laborers and foremen.

**Includes private household workers, service workers and laborers.

Income Level

The final index of socio-economic status, family income when growing up, merely corroborates what we already know about the VISTA Volunteers in the study. Family incomes during the 1950s and '60s, when most of the Volunteers were growing up, exceeded the national average and placed the majority of the Volunteers squarely in the middle or upper middle class.

The following table shows the family income during the time the Volunteers grew up. Of the 126 VISTA Volunteers, only 12% grew up in families with incomes of less than $4,500. Eight Volunteers reported family incomes of less than $2,500 and seven reported incomes in the $2,501 to $4,500 range. Thus, only about ten per cent of the Volunteers probably experienced economic want during their childhood.

TABLE 10 -- Family Income While Volunteers Were Growing Up

Income	VISTA Volunteers Number	 Per cent
Less than $2,500	8	6.4
$2,501 - $4,500	7	5.6
$4,501 - $6,500	29	23.0
$6,501 - $8,500	13	10.3
$8,501 - $10,000	17	13.5
$10,001 - $15,000	14	11.1
$15,001 - $20,000	4	3.2
$20,000 and over	10	7.9
Over $9,500 but no exact amount	12	9.5
No answer	12	9.5
Total	126	100.0

The largest single group of Volunteers--47%--come from families with solid middle class incomes ranging from more than $4,500 to $10,000. Almost one-third--32%--of the Volunteers grew up in homes with incomes of more than $10,000. Although the incomes reported are estimates and not necessarily completely accurate, they are in line with other indices of the group's socio-economic status. It should be remembered that reported income is for the growing-up period (in most cases, 1950s and '60s) and present income of the families would be somewhat higher, reflecting the increase in the American price level and the upward mobility of many of the families.

Outside Interests and Relevant Work Experience

Although most of the Volunteers have spent the last few years in school--mainly college--a sizeable proportion have some previous experience in working with people. Nearly two-thirds report having some kind of social work, recreation or educational work experience--such as counseloring, recreation leading or tutoring. Of this group about half have worked part-time while in school or during the summer, but one-quarter have had full-time, paid work experience.

The principal hobbies and outside activities of the Volunteers are those of all college students--attending movies, theater, concerts and parties. Hobbies include crafts and reading. The Volunteers' interests are generally intellectually oriented with somewhat less interest shown in sports or outdoor activities.

Reasons for Joining VISTA

What motivated these essentially middle-class young people to volunteer for service in VISTA?

When presented with a list of 13 possible reasons for joining VISTA, the majority of the Volunteers in the Columbia sample choose two most compelling reasons: to help other people do something worthwhile, and to learn about the problems of the poor. (See Table 11). Of lesser but still of considerable importance to the Volunteers are learning about themselves and using VISTA as a step towards social work.

TABLE 11 -- Reasons for Joining VISTA
(In Descending Order of Importance)

Reasons	Nature of Reason*	Importance to Volunteers** Very	Somewhat	Not Very
To help other people	O	90.0	9.2	..
To do something worthwhile	O	86.7	12.5	0.8
To learn about the problems of the poor	P-O	75.0	21.7	2.5
To learn about self	P	49.1	41.7	9.2
A step towards social work	P	42.5	31.7	24.2
For a new kind of life	P	35.0	50.0	15.0
To serve my country	O	30.0	52.5	15.8
For adventure	P	12.5	47.5	39.2
To do something different	P	11.7	50.8	34.2
For religious reasons	O	5.0	13.3	80.8
To be able to travel	P	3.3	40.0	55.0
To get away from home	P	1.7	20.8	77.5
For companionship	P	1.7	15.8	81.7

*O = Outer directed, P = Personal

**In some items the figures do not total a 100% response inasmuch as there were anywhere from one to four "no answers".

If the 13 reasons are categorized, according to the principal point of reference, into personal or inner directed reasons and external or outer directed reasons, we see that the primary factors which motivated the Volunteers to join VISTA were outer directed; that is, helping others and doing good. But the Volunteers also are motivated by secondary gains such as learning about the poor as well as themselves, and in testing out the possibility of social work as a career.

In general the parents of the Volunteers support their children's desires to join VISTA. Approximately half of the Volunteers report that their parents approved of their decision, while about one-fourth have parents who are either neutral or who have divided opinions. Only one-third of the Volunteers said their parents definitely oppose their choice of VISTA, mainly due to fears for their children's safety.

CHAPTER III

The Sponsoring Agencies

Introduction

After six weeks of training, VISTA Volunteers are sent to their permanent placements in urban and rural communities, migrant camps, Indian reservations, mental institutions or Job Corps Camps. They are attached to local agencies who serve as their sponsors and who are expected to provide the Volunteers with on-going supervision and in-service training. Agencies that receive the Volunteers have submitted proposals to VISTA Washington, supplying details about themselves, their services and how they expect to use VISTA Volunteers. VISTA sponsors are required to offer programs that focus on self-help by the poor and which allow the VISTA Volunteers to work directly with the poor. The job of the Volunteer must be so designed that it adds new dimensions to existing programs or initiates services where none previously existed.

The kind of agency, its programs, its readiness to accept VISTA Volunteers and the provision it makes for on-going supervision and support, can immeasurably alter the well-being of the Volunteer and his chances of performing a useful and satisfying service to the poor. It is impossible to discuss the work of VISTA Volunteers in the abstract, without relating it to the organizational structure to which the Volunteer is attached. Particularly in urban poverty where agencies tend to be better organized and more highly bureaucratic, the interaction of agency and Volunteer is crucial.

Agency Characteristics

Location

At training's end, the 111 Columbia VISTA Volunteers who successfully passed the VISTA selection procedure were sent to 43 urban sponsoring agencies. These sponsors are located in 17 states and all regions of the country and represent a random selection of urban VISTA agencies.[1] The largest group of agencies and VISTA Volunteers is clustered on the Eastern Seaboard (21 agencies, 52 Volunteers), with the next largest group located in the Midwest (10 agencies, 30 Volunteers). There are, however, Columbia trained Volunteers in the South and Southwest (6 agencies, 18 Volunteers), and the far West as well (5 agencies, 6 Volunteers). The clustering of agencies in the East and Midwest reflects the concentration of urban areas in those regions of the country. (A complete listing of the cities by region to which Volunteers in this study have been assigned is found in Appendix I).

The Volunteers sent to Columbia for training originally expressed a wish to work in urban poverty. The training program itself was geared toward this. It is therefore not surprising that the bulk of the Volunteers were assigned to agencies located in large cities with over 500,000 population, including most of the major cities of the country with the notable exceptions of Detroit and Los Angeles. Table shows the cities, their sizes and the number of agencies and Volunteers assigned to each.

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[1] As the Volunteers were ready for service they were assigned by the Selection Board to whatever urban agency was ready and eligible to receive Volunteers. In most cases agencies available at the end of one training class had received their full VISTA quota by the time the next training cycle was ready for assignment. As a result only in the case of the Bail Bond projects, O.I.C. in Philadelphia and Western Improvement in Baltimore were Columbia Volunteers from more than one training cycle assigned to the same sponsor. See Appendix for complete list of sponsors.

TABLE 12 --Size of Cities to Which Volunteers Were Assigned[1]

Size of City	Agencies N	Volunteers N
Less than 50,000 St. Thomas, Virgin Islands	1	5
50,000 - 99,000 Las Vegas, New Brunswick, Laredo, Lorain	4	6
100,000 - 249,000 New Haven	1	4
250,000 - 499,000 Atlanta, Newark, Oakland, Omaha	6	6
500,000 and over Baltimore, Cleveland, New York, Houston, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Chicago, Boston, Washington, New Orleans, San Francisco, Pittsburgh	31	90
Total	43	111

Type of Agencies

In urban poverty VISTA Volunteers work for a variety of educational, religious and social welfare organizations. Such organizations are generally classified as professional organizations. Their goals are chiefly professional and they employ a high proportion of professionally trained staff.[2] The sponsoring agencies of the Columbia trained Volunteers are no exception.

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[1] U.S. Bureau of Census, 1960.

[2] Amitai Etzioni, A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1961), p. 57.

In analyzing the underlying goals of organizations, three major types have been isolated; order goals, involving the prevention of deviation from society through the segregation of deviant populations (prisons, training schools, etc.); economic goals, involving the production and distribution of goods and services (banks, businesses, etc.) and culture goals, dedicated to the creation and preservation of culture, and commitment to its institutions, beliefs and value systems.

What are the major goals of the 43 sponsoring agencies? How comparable are they?

Agency heads were asked to outline briefly the major goals, objectives and programs of their respective agencies. Although specific programs and orientations differ, all agencies are primarily concerned with "culture goals."

However, some have also begun to incorporate economic goals such as securing improved housing or increased welfare allotments. This commonality of goal orientation gives a broad unity and it is not surprising that the tasks performed by VISTA Volunteers and the problems faced cut across agency and program lines.

Within the broad context of culture oriented-goals, the 43 sponsoring agencies concentrate on a variety of activities and spheres of interest. Some are primarily concerned with organizing groups of citizens to secure better housing inspection or adequate recreational facilities. Others sponsor vocational training programs or assist in the release of arrestees without bail. Some agencies are narrowly oriented toward a specific group of clients such as the mentally retarded. Others encompass a wide spec-

TABLE 13-- Sponsoring Agencies According to Major Function

Type of Agency	Number	Number of Volunteers in Study
Multi-facet community action agency*	9	27
Settlement house or federation of settlement houses	8	21
Education institutions**	5	20
Neighborhood councils and block associations***	5	8
Bail bond project	3	8
Health or rehabilitation service	4	7
City or county urban renewal agency	2	5
Religious organizations****	3	3
City or county welfare department	1	1
Miscellaneous*****	3	11
Total	43	111

*Multi-facet community action agencies are generally the city-wide arm of the War on Poverty. They sponsor a wide variety of service and community organization activities.

**Educational institutions include vocational training programs, boards of education and pre-school programs.

***Neighborhood or block associations are mainly interested in arousing citizen action in such areas as housing, recreation and health.

****Religious organizations are mainly local parishes which sponsor either service programs (i.e., schools) or community organization activities.

*****The miscellaneous category includes a council on human relations, a social welfare planning council and a delinquency project.

trum of clients and a myriad of services and community organization programs. Although agency programs overlap, an attempt was made to categorize the agencies according to the principal services performed. Table 13 shows the type of agencies, the number of each type and the number of Columbia trained Volunteers assigned to them. For a complete list of the agencies see Appendix II.

The largest block of Columbia trained VISTA Volunteers are attached to large, multi-facet community action programs. These agencies, in most cases, operate or coordinate the major anti-poverty program in the community (including Head Start, Neighborhood Service Centers, tutoring programs, vocational training, etc.). The Volunteers attached to the community action programs are usually assigned to one of the component parts.

The next largest group of Volunteers are placed in settlement houses, followed by educational institutions. Slightly more than half the Volunteers are assigned to these three types of agencies.

Age and Size of Agencies

Diversity of geographic location and type of agency is matched by variety in age and size.

Slightly under half the agencies are relatively new (less than 3 years of age); most of these are a direct outgrowth of the War on Poverty. The remaining half are older, more established educational and social welfare agencies, and a sizeable group have anywhere from 30 to more than 60 years of community service. Included in the sample are some of the oldest settlement houses and major boards of education in the country.

However, even the older agencies have felt the impact of the War on Poverty. Their services to the disadvantaged have expanded in the form of new and experimental programs; most of the VISTA Volunteers are assigned to these new programs.

The federal government is a crucial source of funding for the new, as well as the older agencies, and the monies are supplied primarily, but not completely, through the O.E.O.. Had the War on Poverty not been declared, it is questionable whether the services that involve the Volunteers would exist. Thus, while there is a wide age range among the agencies, the older groups are flexible enough to expand their programs radically, thereby attempting to meet the new set of circumstances created by the War on Poverty.

The variation in size and organizational complexity among the 43 agencies is great. It is almost impossible to compare the internal structure of a neighborhood-based improvement associations with a massive board of education or state hospital. Differences based on client population can be misleading inasmuch as the methods of determining client population are so varied. Some organizations consider as clients all children in the city or anyone who has come to a meeting or dropped into a service center. Other agencies encompass a small neighborhood or purposely choose to serve few clients in an intense manner, or only count those getting actual assistance.

Size of agency, however, may have a definite bearing on potential for VISTA adjustment and success. Therefore, some rough measure of agency size is needed. Sponsoring heads were asked for two sets of statistics; approximate number of clients served in a year and number of full-time staff. Client populations ranged from less than 250 in the case of a small neighborhood improvement association or a teenage school run by a local parish, to more than 100,000 in the case of the boards of education. The distribution of staff shows a similar pattern: approximately nine agencies have staffs of ten persons or less; eight agencies have staffs of 11 to 100 persons, while in the case of the eight largest agencies, for which data is available, total staffs start at 100 and run to more than 1,000.[1]

Although there is some overlapping in terms of number of staff and clients served, a pattern appears to emerge. Small urban VISTA agencies tend to have anywhere from one to ten paid, full-time staff and serve up to 2,000 clients per year. Medium sized agencies have staffs ranging from 11 to 100 persons and client loads of about 1,000 to 50,000 per year. The largest agencies have staffs of 100 to as high as 1,000, and have client populations of 2,000 to more than 100,000 per year. It must be remembered that with one or two exceptions, the agencies are not involved in therapeutic intervention, but are primarily in education and social action. As a result, client populations are large, and, in some cases, three to five paid staff members plus VISTA Volunteers may have a projected client load in the thousands. (See Table 14.)

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[1] These latter are the two boards of education and a state hospital.

TABLE 14-- Client Load and Size of Staff of Sponsoring Agencies.*

Staff	Client Load								Do not Serve Clients Directly	No Answer	Total
	Under 250	250-999	1,000-1,999	2,000-4,999	5,000-9,000	10,000-49,999	50,000-99,999	100,000 and over			
Small Agencies											
10 or under	2	--	4	1	--	2	--	--	2	1	12
Medium Agencies											
11 - 99	-	1	3	2	--	1	1	--	--	--	8
Large Agencies											
100 - 499	-	--	--	1	1	2	--	--	1	1	6
500 and over	-	--	--	1	--	1	--	2	--	--	4
No Staff	-	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	1	2
No Answer	-	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	11	11
Total:	2	1	7	5	1	6	1	2	4	14	43

*Fifteen sponsors are excluded from the main body of this table. Four are coordinating bodies and do not serve clients directly. In these agencies VISTAS are assigned to component parts. There is no information on eleven agencies.

Degree of Professionalism

Educational and social welfare agencies have become increasingly professional in the last decades. All but one of the VISTA Sponsoring Agencies are professionally directed and most have professional staffs ranging from one person in the smaller agencies to many hundreds in the large city-wide organizations. The professionals with whom the Volunteers work are not all social workers, they come from many disciplines including teaching, psychology, the ministry, engineering and the law.

The higher the proportion of professionals on an agency staff the more professional the agency tends to be. The agencies in our study show a wide spread with respect to per cent of professionally trained staff. Because of this spread it is meaningless to generalize about degree of professionalism of these urban VISTA agencies. (see Table 15.) Suffice it to say that the sample includes some marginally professional agencies (such as block associations) and some highly professional organizations (such as casework agencies, boards of education and state hospitals).

TABLE 15 -- Professionals as Per cent of Total Staff

Per cent	Number of Agencies
1 - 25	6
25 - 50	7
51 - 75	3
76 - 100	6
One professional staff member	6
No staff as such, a coordinating body	2
No information	13
Total	43

With the possible exception of the boards of education, a vocational training program, the bail bond projects and the state mental hospital, professional and non-professional lines tend to be blurred and jobs assigned more on the basis of available personnel than on professional qualifications. Thus fluidity of staffing, of course, benefits the VISTA Volunteers, few of whom bring with them any professional training. Approximately two-thirds of the Volunteers found that there was no sharp demarcation in their agencies between professional and non-professional staff, with respect to duties and status, while at least half reported that most people in the agency thought of the VISTAS as part of the professional staff. According to the Volunteers, most of the professional staff seemed to have as much enthusiasm and dedication as the Volunteers themselves.

Mode of Operation

One final variable which could have considerable effect on VISTA satisfaction is the principal mode of operation of the Sponsoring Agency. In carrying out their goals, some agencies concentrate primarily on providing direct service to clients. Others have as their principal mode of operation community action, involving the organization of clients into social actions groups to secure needed services. The Columbia Training Program from its inception was geared to the preparation of VISTA Volunteers for community action agencies, and it was assumed that the concentration point of VISTA activity would be community organization. In reality, more than half (58%) of the Volunteers found their agencies to be primarily oriented toward providing immediate and direct service to clients; only about one-quarter were engaged primarily in community action and the rest were involved in both service and community organization.

The Volunteers Look At Their Agencies

Although the Volunteers' perception of agency is only one view, it is a crucial one in the context of the present study. Adjustment to agency and internalization of its goals and value systems represent one of the principal hurdles facing the VISTA Volunteer in urban poverty and is intertwined with performance and job satisfaction. To a great extent, the Columbia trained Volunteers feel positively about the agencies to which they are attached. Unquestionably this positive evaluation helped to insure their job success and their low attrition rate. When considering their feelings, it is important to keep in mind that the majority of the agencies are involved in direct service rather than community organization. It should be noted too that the organizations vary from large, complex professional agencies to small, fluid neighborhood associations.

From a battery of questions covering various staffing and organizational aspects of agencies comes a profile of the sponsoring agencies of the 111 Columbia trained Volunteers as perceived by the Volunteers at the end of four months on the job.

Positive Orientation Towards Clients

Most important, the sponsoring agencies, in general, were considered by the Volunteers to have a positive approach to the poor. Eighty-eight per cent of the Volunteers report their agencies are sympathetic to clients. At least 82% felt their agencies are involved with the poor, and, despite problems, are trying to do a job for the poor; while 78% saw their sponsors as dealing with the most pressing problems in the community.

Despite the fact that so many agencies are service-oriented, rather than involved in direct social action, most of the Volunteers judged their sponsors' goals to be entirely compatible with their personal motivations for joining VISTA (i.e., effective service to the poor). This goal compatibility represents a crucial step in the process of Volunteer internalization of agency goals. In a sense, problems of bureaucracy, channels, poor supervision, etc. diminish in importance once Volunteers perceive that they and the agency are going in the same direction, although not necessarily by the same means. (See Section A, Table 16.)

Atmosphere of Dedication,Commitment

But the agencies have more in common with the Volunteers than a compatibility of goals and a positive approach to the poor. The atmosphere of the agencies was considered conducive to carrying out the job by 60% or more of the Volunteers. They report that a sense of enthusiasm and dedication permeates, and there is evidence of a positive relationship between clients and staff. In addition, the Volunteers report a strong sense of purpose and a tendency for everyone to pitch in and do the job without regard to rank or status. (See Section B, Table 16.)

Relationships Within Agency

Interpersonal relationships between members of the agency staff and between the staff and the VISTA Volunteers were perceived as positive by almost two-thirds of the Volunteers. Sixty-three per cent felt that a closely knit feeling exists between members of the agency staff, and that warmth and friendliness pervades. Most of the VISTAS had little difficulty being accepted by the agency staff, thus they also benefit from this close supportive atmosphere.

In most agencies there was an absence of excessive preoccupation with professionalism. As had been noted, 60% or more of the Volunteers reported no sharp demarcations between professional and non-professional staff. (In fact, VISTA Volunteers often found themselves considered as professional staff.) There is a definite concern on the part of the administration about staff development and growth including the development of the Volunteers. As Volunteers grow on the job, responsibilities tend to increase and most of them feel that their skills and abilities are used to the fullest extent. Thus, not only are the sponsors of almost two-thirds of the Volunteers considered to be genuinely concerned with the poor and committed to an effective job, but staff relationships mirror this dedication.

The absence of excessive professionalism, however, was not true in all agencies and all VISTA Volunteers did not feel equally positive about their agencies. But the general picture was of flexibility, staff cohesiveness and positive orientation towards common goals. (See Section C, Table 16.)

Internal Pressure

Because of the immensity of the poverty problems at hand and the newness of many agencies and/or programs, there is considerable internal pressure on staff. Although the VISTA Volunteers alleviated, to some degree, the severity of the manpower problem, the pressures were by no means solved. Emergencies always occurred in almost half the agencies and the staff is continually harassed because there is so much to do and not enough help. It is not surprising that more than two-thirds of the Volunteers felt they were being used to the fullest and not just relegated to routine work. (See Section D, Table 16 which follows.)

TABLE 16 -- Evaluation of Agency by VISTA Volunteers

Area of Evaluation		Percent of Volunteers Agreeing
A. Positive Approach to Poor		
Sympathetic to clients		88.3
Very	59.5	
Somewhat	28.8	
Involved with poor		82.0
Very	50.5	
Somewhat	31.5	
Inspite of problems, trying to do job for poor		83.8
Dealing with some of most pressing problems of community		77.5
B. Atmosphere of Agency		
Warm feeling between staff and clients		67.6
Sense of enthusiasm and commitment		66.7
Strong sense of purpose, everyone pitches in no matter what his job		59.5

TABLE 16 -- Evaluation of Agency by VISTA Volunteers--Continued

Area of Evaluation	Per cent of Volunteers Agreeing
C. Staff Relationships--Emphasis on Professionalism	
No overemphasis on professionalism	77.5
Supervisors concerned about staff growth and development	67.6
Staff closely knit, warm friendly feeling	63.1
No sharp demarcations between professional and non-professional staff	62.2
Professional staff as enthusiastic and dedicated as Volunteers	60.4
Many people consider VISTAS part of professional staff	56.8
D. Amount of Work, Use of Volunteers	
VISTAS used to fullest, not only for routine work	67.6
Considerable pressure on staff because so much to do, not enough staff	57.7
Emergencies always occurring that need coping with	46.9

Organizational Relationships

Columbia trained Volunteers were assigned to agencies which ranged from very small informal groups, to very large complex organizations. Size of organization is, of course, an important factor in determining relationships. The larger the organization, the greater the tendency for more organized, bureaucratic and formalized relationships. The smaller the organization, the more chance for warmth, informality and easy acceptance of another pair of hands. All agencies require some degree of organization and some bureaucracy, but excessive structure and control is hard for young Volunteers to accept.

The following tables indicate how the Volunteers viewed their agencies with respect to degree of organization, amount of bureaucracy and openness to new ideas.

Volunteer Reactions to Agency

Degree of Organization	%	Amount of Bureaucracy	%
Highly organized	24.3	Highly bureaucratic	17.1
Somewhat organized	40.6	Somewhat bureaucratic	52.3
Somewhat disorganized	27.9	Not at all bureaucratic	29.7
Highly disorganized	07.2		
No response	--	No response	0.9
Total	100.0	Total	100.0

Degree of Openness to New Ideas

	Per cent
Not at all open to new ideas	07.1
Somewhat open	46.0
Very open	46.0
No response	0.9
Total	100.0

Only a small percentage of Volunteers see their agencies as overly bureaucratic and unreceptive to new ideas. Most feel that the sponsoring agencies embody the necessary structure to function effectively and that bureaucracy as such is not a problem hampering agency effectiveness. (Almost one-third of the Volunteers felt their agencies were completely free of bureaucracy while 46% said they found sponsors completely open and receptive to new ideas.)

VISTA Volunteers, frequently at the bottom of the agency hierarchy, are particularly sensitive to openness of agency communications and the amount of time it takes for new policies and procedures to be communicated to all staff echelons. More than 60% felt that it took a reasonable amount of time for the communication of ideas, attesting again to the relatively unbureaucratic nature of many of the agencies involved.

Agencies that are either too highly organized or too disorganized present different kinds of problems to VISTA Volunteers. Considering the size of some of the agencies, it is not surprising that about 25% of the Volunteers evaluated their sponsors as highly organized. Only seven per cent, however, reported a high state of disorganization. The vast majority chose a middle ground evaluation of moderate organization. Slightly more Volunteers felt the agency was somewhat organized rather than somewhat disorganized.

Overall Evaluation of Agencies

The overall evaluation of their agencies merely reinforces the positive picture painted by a majority of the Volunteers. Approximately two-thirds rate their sponsoring agencies as a good or excellent place for a VISTA Volunteer and 60% report their agencies are doing either a good or excellent job for the poor. A minority of Volunteers dissent in these evaluations. The following tables show the Volunteer reactions:

Agency as a Place for VISTA Volunteers		
Excellent	place	35.2%
Good	"	30.6
Fair	"	20.7
Poor	"	13.5
Total		100.0%

Quality of Job		
Excellent	job	23.4%
Good	"	37.0
Fair	"	32.4
Poor	"	07.2
Total		100.0%

Problems Faced by Agencies in Doing an Effective Job

Although Volunteers were essentially positive in evaluating the goals, relationships and structure of their agencies, they were not without awareness of some of the problems which potentially hamper effective service to the poor. Given a series of potential problem areas, Volunteers were asked to rate the areas as creating serious problems, minor problems or no real problems at all for their agencies. In the following table, the areas are divided into three categories: problems external to the agency, arising either from community and clients or from other agencies; problems internal to the agency arising from interference by boards, agency structure, funding groups, staff; and problems pertaining to the program, its conception, implementation, or resources available. Responses of serious and minor have been combined into a problem category.

TABLE 17 -- Problems Faced by Sponsoring Agencies as Perceived by Volunteers

Rank Order of Seriousness of Problem		Respondents noting	
		Problem	No Problem
	External Problems	%	%
2	Lack of support of community	69.3	28.8*
4	Local political forces	59.4	32.4*
7	Hostility on part of other community agencies	42.3	51.4*
6	Restrictive policies of other agencies with which must work	46.8	46.0*
3	Clients' indifference	63.7	32.4*
	Internal Agency Problems		
5	Bureaucracy and red tape in agency	54.0	46.0
11	Interference by funding	27.0	59.5*
12	Interference by agency board	26.1	53.2*
8	Interference by professional staff	37.8	53.5*
	Program Problems		
1	Lack of money resources	70.3	29.7
9	Agency program	36.2	61.3*
10	Overlapping and duplication of services among agencies in area	30.6	64.0*

*Total of Problem and No Problem categories does not equal 100% because of Volunteers who felt they did not know the situation in their agencies sufficiently to answer the question.

As can be seen in the preceding table, the Volunteers felt that the major problems facing their agencies, in carrying out their poverty goals, were created by others and did not stem from agency deficiencies as such. The most serious problem was lack of money, followed closely by such clearly external factors as lack of community support, client indifference, the negative effect of local political forces, restrictive policies or hostility on the part of other community agencies also involved in serving the same population.

Agency boards, staff funding agents, program and bureaucracy were seen in a relatively positive view as helping, rather than hindering, efforts to serve the poor.

Again we see a clear indication of how far the Volunteers have come within four months in their positive identification with Sponsors and their internalization of agency perceptions. It would appear that the Sponsoring Agencies, despite any claims about Volunteer indifference or hostility, have done a remarkable job of building a positive image of social welfare agencies in the eyes of a majority of the Volunteers. This positive image should be influential in determining whether the Volunteers remain in the helping professions after VISTA. Even more important, it may well color their future roles as citizens when they return to their own communities.

To summarize, from the foregoing we get a positive picture of the urban VISTA Sponsoring Agencies. As seen by the VISTA Volunteers, they tend to be relatively unbureaucratic and conducive to a free flow of ideas. There is flexible staffing in order to meet both individual abilities and emergency needs. Professional standards, though applicable, are not unduly regimenting and there is a strong sense of purpose and dedication to the welfare of clients and the elimination of poverty. The agencies are hectic, under pressure but warm and closely knit. VISTA Volunteers have had few problems of acceptance and are often considered as professionals. For approximately 60% of the Volunteers, their introduction to social agencies is positive; they evidence a sense of identification and, to a considerable degree, internalization of agency goals, procedures and staff policies. Approximately two-thirds of the Volunteers feel their agencies were good or excellent places for VISTA Volunteers and 60% report that their agencies are doing a good or excellent job for the poor.

This does not mean, however, that a positive picture exists for all Volunteers. Approximately 30-35% of the Volunteers expressed negative feelings about their agency. Approximately one-third of the Volunteers found the atmosphere of their agencies lacking in warmth and commitment. Slightly under one-third raised questions of excessive professionalism and separation of professionals and non-professionals. About 20% question their agencies' dedication to the welfare of the poor. In future reports, it will be important to isolate this group of unsatisfied Volunteers in order to determine whether particular types of agencies, jobs or personal characteristics of Volunteers are responsible for this dissatisfaction.

Although we can only applaud the degree of integration with agency achieved by the Volunteers within a four month period, what of the critic and gadfly dimension of the VISTA role? Did the Columbia Volunteers too readily accept agency perceptions about the barriers to effective service to the poor? It is fine for Volunteers to adjust to and internalize the role of an agency, but one hopes that some Volunteers can maintain a critical distance. It is hard to believe that the Sponsoring Agencies of the Volunteers were so generally devoid of problems. Perhaps it is too much to expect most young inexperienced Volunteers to be both part of and not part of an organization, to believe in and yet remain critical.

CHAPTER IV

The Role of the VISTA Volunteer in Urban Poverty

Introduction

Before discussing the specific tasks performed by the VISTA Volunteer in urban poverty, it is valuable to look at the historical and social background which gave rise to VISTA and against which the role is played.

Although there have always been groups in our society interested in the problems of the poor and the manifest inequities among various sectors of society, the War on Poverty has, since its inception in 1964, riveted public opinion on the existence of some 35 million Americans who live in squalor and abject poverty amidst great material wealth. Furthermore, the War on Poverty has institutionalized to a heretofore unknown extent, public and private efforts to reach these people and bring them into the mainstream of middle-class American life.

Only once before in our history--during the crisis days of the New Deal--has the government been so committed to providing extensive economic and social relief to a sector of the population suffering from acute want. But the target group of the New Deal and the compact between the Roosevelt administration and the people were different. The central theme of President Roosevelt's New Deal was its insistence that ownership of private property entailed a responsibility to public interest as well as to private gain; that it was the role of the government to intervene, if necessary, to ensure that each individual who wanted work had the opportunity to be decently and gainfully employed. The key to the New Deal philosophy was the provision of opportunity for those who were willing to strive for it, those who would work for their own betterment.

But what of the individuals in society who cannot successfully help themselves, who are victims of forces beyond their control such as discrimination or lack of education? Such individuals were overlooked by the New Deal and passed over by the post-war prosperity years. Congress stated in the message published with the Economic Opportunity Act:

> There remains an unseen America, a land of limited opportunity and restricted choice.... These are the people behind the American looking glass. There are nearly 35 million of them. Being poor is not a choice for these millions; it is a rigid way of life. It is handed down from generation to generation in a cycle of inadequate education, inadequate homes, inadequate jobs and stunted ambitions.

These so-called "hard core poor" are the target population of the War on Poverty and the client groups of the VISTA Volunteers. How to effectively reach and assist them to break out of the cycle of poverty is a crucial challenge facing the helping professions today.

The burgeoning government programs and greater recognition of human needs have intensified an existing shortage of manpower in the social welfare field. As a result, new and creative uses of subprofessionals are being introduced. Questions are being raised as to the appropriateness of extensive reliance on the psychotherapeutic model as the sole method of intervention. Implicit in this is the realization that traditional methods have failed to reach the target population of the War on Poverty. VISTA and the role of the Volunteers is an integral part of the attempt on the part of the government and private sectors of social welfare to meet the new challenges posed by the War on Poverty.

The emphasis on a one-to-one relationship, aimed at removing the internal obstacles blocking full ego functioning, is giving way to a broader recognition of the positive ways in which ego processes (i.e., those personality processes which mediate the individual's attempt to be successful in his environment) are developed and molded through challenge and growth.[1,2] The short experience of the War on Poverty has underlined the fact that a major aspect of cultural and economic deprivation is the lack of opportunity to develop ego skills and attitudes so essential to our middle class, highly symbolic, technological society.

As a result, a need has crystallized for another model of individual intervention--the social competence model,[1,2] which draws heavily on education techniques rather than therapy.

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[1] T. Gladwin, Social Competence and Clinical Practice. Washington, National Institute of Mental Health, March 1966.

[2] G. Rae, A.F. Quentin, T. Gladwin, and E.M. Bower, "Mental Health, Social Competence and the War on Poverty," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, vol. 36, No. 4, July 1966, pp. 652-664.

As Reissman[1] says in "New Approaches to Mental Health Treatment for Labor and Low Income Groups":

> Low income people are task oriented, concrete. concerned primarily with the here and now and focussed on solving immediate problems. If they have troubles they are interested in finding a way to cope with them. I am convinced that if we are to help them we must respond to their need, as they see it, for more successful coping techniques. It is necessary to shift our focus from how they are reacting to how they are acting, from defensive reactions to coping styles, from changing their reactions to teaching them more successful actions.

While the social competence model directs attention to a new form of individual intervention, another model of group intervention has also come to the fore through the efforts of the Civil Rights Movement and the War on Poverty--the social power model. If one accepts the premise that there is a direct relationship between lack of power and poverty, which results in the perpetuation of the poor, generation after generation, then reliance on the social competence model is insufficient. Since the cycle of poverty is caused principally by societal factors, such factors can best be influenced through group action of the poor to bring about institutional change. This model of group organization is at the very heart of the War on Poverty's Community Action Porgrams. Both the social competence and social power models are necessary and mutually reinforcing, and the role of the VISTA Volunteer must be considered in the context of these twin models. Accepting the premise of the War on Poverty--that society should guarantee everyone the right to be part of the mainstream, and that this right can be best realized through opportunities for maximum participation by the poor in actions to meet their needs--what is the role of the VISTA Volunteer in this endeavor?

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[1] F. Reissman, New Approaches to Mental Health Treatment for Labor and Low Income Groups, Rep. No. 2, National Inst. of Labor Education Mental Health Program, Feb. 1964.

It is well and good for professionals to accept theoretically the need of the poor for social competence and social power. What about the poor themselves? Experience has shown that the grinding effects of poverty and discrimination, generation after generation, may result in a deep-seated apathy and disillusionment. Yet the success of either the social competence or the social power models presupposes a mobilization of the poor. Clearly some force is needed to bridge the gap, to bring together the server and the served, the needy and the services. An important new source of such manpower has been discovered in the trained indigenous worker drawn from the very groups to which intervention is directed. Reports coming from various projects throughout the country attest to the success of the indigenous nonprofessional working with the poor in such diverse jobs as research interviewer, recreation aide, child welfare aide, parent education aide, homemaker, mental health aide and indigenous organizer for Community Action Programs. This movement, although growing, is not widespread enough to meet all needs for "bridging" manpower. In addition, it would appear that the use of indigenous workers as bridges to and from the poor has, within it, potential contradictions which might in time undermine their effectiveness. As such workers become involved in the agencies for which they work, there is an ever present tendency for them to become overidentified with the agency and the professionals and to grow apart from the community from which they came.[1]

The trade union movement offers vivid examples of how "workers from the plant" can be transformed into union businessmen as they are exposed to middle-class environment and aspirations. This is not, of course, offered as an argument against indigenous workers. but merely as an illustration of the complexity of relying on any one group as the sole source of essential "bridging" manpower.

Our research indicates there is another important source of manpower for the crucial process of mobilizing the poor--the VISTA Volunteer . Because of a unique blend of youth, idealism, and living in the neighborhood VISTA Volunteers are able to bridge the gap between "the haves" and "the have nots" and serve as effective catalytic agents in the fight of the poor to break the cycle of poverty.

The VISTA Role

Most VISTA jobs, whether in Community Action Programs, settlements, Bail Bond or Appalachia, involve several layers of activity derived from the common components of the VISTA role. To varying degrees VISTA Volunteers serve the poor as:

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[1] R. Reif and F. Reissman, The Indigenous Nonprofessionals: Strategy of Change in Community Action and Community Mental Health Programs, Report No. 3, National Institute of Labor Education. Mental Health Program, Nov. 1964.

1. Bridges between the world of the ghetto and the world outside.

   Informing the ghetto community about opportunities and serving as the go-between who brings the poor face-to-face with the available services

2. Sparks or catalysts

   Activating neighbors to join together to do something for themselves

3. Service Agents

   Offering concrete help to individuals or families in need--teaching, tutoring, intervention and advocacy

4. Innovators and gadflys

   Discovering needs and trying out new services, criticizing the status quo and advancing the untried

5. Symbols of mobility and concern

   Offering a contact with the outside world, and a representative of the larger society that cares

Some examples of how VISTA Volunteers play out these roles will clarify what is meant by bridge. catalysts, service agents, etc.

The VISTA Volunteer as a Bridge

Sargent Shriver has said "VISTA Volunteers are the heart of the War on Poverty and will attempt to bridge the gulf between the poor and the rest of America." Of all the services offered by VISTA Volunteers. communication to and from the ghettos is probably the most important. Some VISTA jobs are especially designed to encompass the bridge role. For example, the boards of education in two large cities, one in the East and one in the Middle West, have allowed

VISTA Volunteers who are attached to schools in Negro ghettos to develop systematic home visiting programs aimed at bringing the home and school into more direct communication.

> Rachel, a 23-year-old VISTA Volunteer, is kiddingly referred to as a "street walker" by her fellow Volunteers because she walks around the neighborhood surrounding the school all day visiting homes.
>
> She explains that the school is trying to do a good educational job in the classroom but cannot be successful without the parents' understanding and cooperation. Her job is to link the two; to talk with parents about the school; to encourage them to come in and talk with the principal when necessary; to inform the neighborhood about the available enrichment programs such as pre-school and Saturday morning kindergartens; to visit the homes of absent children to see if family problems are preventing attendance and to help such families get connected with the Neighborhood Opportunities Center where assistance is available. At the same time, Rachel tries to help teachers understand the home problems of particular children, and on the day we visited, it was Rachel who found a missing child whom neither parents nor school could locate.
>
> With the help of this VISTA and others like her, a public school in the deepest ghetto is developing a two-pronged approach to education encompassing both the classroom and the home.

In other cases, the bridge activity arises informally and is not necessarily job-connected. It stems from the fact that the Volunteers live in the neighborhoods, are accessible to all, are willing to listen to problems and to suggest remedies and encourage action. Almost two-thirds of the Volunteers in our sample report that neighbors have dropped in after hours to ask for help.

A middle-aged Volunteer who works in the adult education program of a local school gave an account of how the process works:

> I get all kinds of requests for help--students frequently contact me for other neighbors who need help--which is very nice. They ask me almost anything in the world they think I know the answer to. They telephone me, seek me out' at meetings, on the street and after classes.
>
> You see, I'm so accessible--they know where I live because I tutor at home, so my apartment is open to them. What to do about rats, cub scouts, recourse to landlords, health problems; everything. I always try to do something--usually referral or information.

In answer to the question "Do you think the fact that you were a VISTA Volunteer made any difference in your neighbors' choosing to come to you for help?" she said, "Yes, I establish this immediately and offer my services--offer them recklessly--which I think a VISTA Volunteer should. I don't think they would have accepted me, a white, if I weren't a VISTA."

The VISTA Volunteer as a Service Agent

In addition to informing the neighborhood about services, recruiting for programs and referring those in need of help, many VISTA Volunteers serve as staff in agency programs, deepening and extending the impact of the services offered. For example, in a large Negro literacy and vocational training program, VISTA Volunteers work in the classrooms along with trained teachers to increase the educational possibilities for the student. A Volunteer said about her work:

> I'm a teaching assistant in the math class from 9 to 4 and tutor at night in another school. The instructor is usually present, but I take at least one-half responsibility for the class. I do a certain amount of organization of the class--finding out who is on what level, informally placing them in groups. Very often I take part of the class and instruct them. Equally often I work with three or four individuals on different levels. I move from group to group in class finding out who is lost, bored, unhappy, and by this time have been able to establish good relationships with most of the students.
>
> I do some attendance and keep records, but this is not a burden since it enables me to know people's names and get closer to them. Because of the personality of the instructor I make it my business to soften the blow when I sense he's going to get angry.

VISTA Volunteers as Catalysts

Second only to the bridging function in significance is the role of the VISTA Volunteer as catalyst or spark plug for social action.

> In a large Southern city several young Volunteers attached to a Neighborhood Service Center are organizing a poor white fundamentalist community which lies in the shadow of a large mill.
>
> When the Volunteers first arrived, houses were crumbling and streets were filthy. Within three months a Citizens Mutual Club had been formed and the effects of a club-sponsored clean-up campaign were evident. Pressure was being exerted upon the city to fix the sewer system and resurface the streets. A voter registration drive had produced 45 new voters. (The fact that all voted for the segregationist candidate did not appreciably diminish the Volunteers' pleasure.)
>
> At the present time the VISTAS are struggling with the problem of how to help the teenagers organize a club-sponsored youth program which will meet their needs and yet not incur the wrath of their fundamentalist parents. For as one Volunteer will tell you:

> We want a broader program for teenagers but the Citizens Mutual Club is the continuing force in this community when we leave--we cannot afford to split it because of dances for teenagers. It's a funny thing, here we are-- VISTAS --helping to create a power structure in a community and this structure turns out to be very conservative in terms of our values and yet very liberal in terms of the movement in this community.

How VISTA Volunteers serve as catalysts can best be described in their own words:

> Lorne Street is a dead-end street near a large state hospital. There are 34 houses, the majority of which are three family dwellings. In all, the street has approximately 140 adults and 250 children, mostly Negro. At the head is a rundown playground and at the base a store which overcharges the people in the street.
>
> Lorne Street has poor housing, garbage, absentee landlords, rats, roaches, poor schools, high percentage of welfare mothers, high crime rate, little police protection and a highly transient population.
>
> The four of us rented two apartments on the street. It was summer and another agency had just pulled out of a recreation program they started for the kids on the block. We stepped in and ran the program during August. It gave us a chance to get to know the kids and some of the mothers.
>
> It soon became evident to us that one of the channels in trying to improve conditions on Lorne Street was some sort of organization of adults. We began by dividing the street into four sections and each of us went to see the families in his area. We approached the adults by explaining who we were and discussing the problems of Lorne Street. The most mentioned problems were housing and police protection. We told them about the American Friends Service Committee's "Call for Action" program to improve housing and asked if they'd be interested to meet with other neighbors about this and other problems. They were far from optimistic about the chances for any successful action being taken, yet they were willing to try.

> (The neighbors of Lorne Street did meet, and self-help has begun. Tenants have organized against landlords, a tutoring program using mothers on the street is underway and there is talk of a coffee house and a referral center to connect the people on the block with available community services.)

The VISTA Volunteer as Innovator

Another important VISTA function is that of innovator of new services or gadfly with respect to existing services. Sometimes the Volunteer recognizes the need for a new service or another way of doing things and comes to the agency with a plan. Interviews with both Volunteers and Supervisors indicate that many of these suggestions receive agency approval and the VISTA is given permission to put his idea into action.

In other instances, the agency itself has conceived of a new project but is without funds or staff to carry forward the idea. VISTA Volunteers are assigned to the agency to experiment with and carry out the pilot program.

> In a large California city, Volunteers were assigned to a local Parish to set up and run a school for teenagers who have been expelled from the public schools, usually because of behavior problems. This school has been established by the Parish as an education salvage operation and they hope to demonstrate to the local Board of Education the feasibility of such a program. Although the Parish was instrumental in organizing the school and serves as a buffer between the school and community agencies, the day-to-day operation is managed by the VISTAS with minimal assistance from the sponsor. Ten VISTA Volunteers comprise the staff of this school; one acts as principal, five are teachers and the remaining four are deployed as community workers concerned with establishing relations

> with parents and interpreting the school program and purpose to prospective students and the community at large. Supplementing the VISTAS and, under their supervision, are volunteer parent-aides and a work study student from a local university. During the past year the school maintained steady enrollment of 45 students--all high school dropouts. The VISTAS have experimented with unconventional classroom methods including field trips, liberal individual attention and even some psychodrama. Now the Board of Education is interested in the school and may take back one of the "graduates".
>
> The individual involvement of the VISTAS with the students in this situation often brings to light deep-seated problems which at times the VISTAS find too much to handle. Unfortunately in this set-up there is no professional help available to the Volunteers to provide more intensive treatment when needed. The VISTA Volunteers worry about this lack.

The VISTA as a Symbol of Mobility and Concern

The VISTA Volunteers in our sample report that because they are white, middle class and from a different part of the country, they serve some symbolic purpose in Negro ghettos. Volunteers say that teenagers look to them as symbols of mobility and that for many black citizens, the VISTA Volunteers offer the first experience with whites who care.

What Does a Typical Group of VISTA Volunteers Do in Urban Poverty

We will move now from a consideration of the conceptual framework of VISTA and the VISTA role to a detailed examination of how a typical group of 111 Volunteers act out the role in urban poverty. To what extent do VISTA Volunteers serve as bridges, service agents, catalysts, innovators and symbols of hope to the hard-core poor? What type of tasks do they carry out, and how?

In an attempt to classify the jobs of the Volunteers in our sample into some meaningful system, each Volunteer was asked to describe in detail his present job and the amount of time spent on each part, if the job entailed several functions.

The jobs as reported by the Volunteers were varied. They occurred in many settings, covered the gamut of tasks usually associated with the helping process. They were referred to by a variety of job titles including case aide, community organizer, teacher, group worker, etc. In order to summarize such seemingly disparate jobs, some classification system had to be developed. An analytical study of the 111 job descriptions indicated that there were three distinct functions which could be isolated and which occurred in one or more combinations in most VISTA jobs.

The three functions, as previously enumerated, were the bridge function, the service function and the catalyst function, and they became the basis of the classification system employed. (The innovative and symbolic roles of VISTA Volunteers appeared to be present across the board and were eliminated as a basis of classification.)

The definitions of the components used in the classification process are as follows:

I. Service Function

Service to Groups

Maintenance service to groups--tutoring, teaching, leading group, acting as resource person to group. May or may not be involved in initial organization of group. Prime purpose of these groups is self-betterment of members rather than social change (i.e. recreation, sewing, group of ADC mothers, ex-addicts, etc.)

VISTA may perform escort duties or intervene in behalf of members of the group, or the group as a whole, but this arises out of the group process.

Service to Individuals

Working with an individual or family on an on-going "case" basis, counselling, referral, or intervention on behalf of client. Volunteer has own caseload or assists professional with his or her caseload. If referral made generally continues to maintain contact with client.

II. Bridge Function

Communicators between the poor and the outside world. Carry message of agency and available services into community--carry back needs of community to agency. Survey community needs, recruit, publicize. May do escort or referral service on a short-term basis but not as an on-going service. Bridge is frequently the first step in the community organization process.[1]

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[1] The bridge model described here is a formal job model. Many VISTA Volunteers function informally in a bridge role after hours by virtue of the fact that they live in the community and yet are also attached to an outside agency and world.

III. Catalyst Function

> Organizes or assists in the organization of community groups for social change (i.e. parent groups, block associations, tenants). The goal of the action is to change the power position of the poor and affect the distribution of available goods and services for the poor. VISTAS sometimes offer maintenance service to the groups after they are organized.

Using the above definitions, two judges classified each job description according to the purpose of the job as ennumerated by the Volunteer. (If the Volunteer spent less than 20% of his time on a particular component, it was dropped from consideration.) This method of classification revealed that many VISTA jobs revolved around one main component or dimension--i.e. service to individuals, or catalyst. But some jobs contained more than one component and were given a multiple-classification indicative of the various components in the job--i.e. service to individuals and bridge, or catalyst and service to groups. No attempt was made to rank-order the importance of the combined components. Rather, the classification system utilized, was seen merely as a method of describing the dimensions and degree of complexity of the 111 VISTA jobs studied.

What did this classification reveal about the nature of VISTA jobs in urban poverty? The following table summarizes the classification of the 111 VISTA jobs according to their principle components.

TABLE 18 -- Classification of Jobs of Urban VISTA Volunteers

Classification	Total Group		Jobs By Training Cycles									
			III		IV		V		VI		VII	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
One function:	72	64.8	15	71.4	14	60.9	17	60.7	10	62.5	16	69.6
Bridge........	10	9.0	2	9.5	1	4.3	6	21.4	-	-	1	4.3
Catalyst......	18	16.2	4	19.0	5	21.8	1	3.6	2	12.5	6	26.2
Service.......	44	39.6	9	42.9	8	34.8	10	35.7	8	50.0	9	39.1
To individuals.........	12	10.8	2	9.6	5	21.7	2	7.1	1	6.3	2	8.7
To groups....	32	28.8	7	33.3	3	13.1	8	28.6	7	43.7	7	30.4
Two functions:	35	31.5	6	28.6	7	30.4	10	35.7	6	37.5	6	26.1
Bridge & catalyst	1	.9	-	-	1	4.3	-	-	-	-	-	
Bridge & service to individuals.	2	1.8	-	-	1	4.3	1	3.6	-	-	-	-
Bridge & service to groups......	11	10.1	4	19.0	3	13.2	2	7.1	-	-	2	8.7
Service to individuals & groups	15	13.3	1	4.8	1	4.3	6	21.4	5	31.2	2	8.7
Catalyst plus service to individuals......	1	.9	1	4.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Catalyst plus service to groups.........	5	4.5	-	-	1	4.3	1	3.6	1	6.3	2	8.7
Three functions:	4	3.6	-	-	2	8.7	1	3.6	-	-	1	4.3
Bridge & catalyst & service to groups	1	.9	-	-	1	4.3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Catalyst & service to individuals & groups	1	.9	-	-	-	-	1	3.6	-	-	-	-
Bridge & service to individuals & service to groups....	2	1.8	-	-	1	4.4	-	-	-	-	1	4.3
Total	111	99.9	21	100.0	23	100.0	28	100.0	16	100.0	23	100.0

First and foremost, it appears that the majority of jobs held by the Volunteers in our sample contained some service component. Of the 111 jobs described, 74% included some direct, sustained service to groups or individuals or both. Such direct service might include counseling, intervention, advocacy, tutoring or teaching, or group maintenance functions. Service to groups, however, outnumbered service to individuals by two to one. Forty per cent of the Volunteers had jobs consisting only of a service component. In the remaining 34% of the cases, the service component was combined with at least one other component, usually the bridging function.

Approximately one quarter of the Volunteers had a formal "bridge" component built into their jobs. As has been noted, bridging also occurred in an informal non-agency context as the Volunteers made contacts in the neighborhoods in which they lived, and became known as persons to come to with a problem. (See Chapter - After Hours.) But in 25% of the jobs, a specific amount of time was allotted to bridging activities such as visiting, recruiting, making neighborhood surveys, etc.[1] Where the bridging function was combined with other components, the most frequent combinations were with catalyst, and service to groups.

Only about one quarter of the Volunteers were involved in community organization for social action as a portion of their agency jobs. (Again it is necessary to distinguish between those for whom the catalyst role was structured into their jobs and those who may have helped organize community groups in their spare time.)

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[1] It is possible that the proportion of Volunteers with a bridging component is slightly underestimated. Bridging is often the first step in community organization so that some catalyst jobs probably included a bridging component as well. However, when the Volunteer did not specifically spell out bridging activities in the job description, the component was not included in the classification of the job.

Many Volunteers involved in organizing the community into social action groups also continued to service these groups after they were organized. Considering the fact that the Columbia Volunteers were trained for community action in urban poverty, the number actually serving as organizers appears to be proportionately small. Undoubtedly, this was due to the definition of the jobs by the agencies, since most of the Volunteers left Columbia eager to go into the community and organize. The low proportion given this opportunity, caused some initial unhappiness among the Volunteers, leading some to question whether "service" jobs were really VISTA jobs. By the time the field visits were made, however, many of the dissatisfied Volunteers had become caught up in the challenge of the work (whether bridge or service), and were finding their jobs rewarding. Nevertheless, in the background there remained the persistent refrain: "Isn't a VISTA supposed to be a community organizer? What am I doing tutoring, teaching, or leading a group of kids? Is this VISTA?"

A sensitive Volunteer, doing a fine teaching job in an adult literacy and vocational training program, expressed the dilemma this way:

> I spent a lot of time during my first months worrying about was my job a VISTA job, was I a tool of the agency, was it worthwhile. I still don't know whether the conclusion I came to was rationalization or whether I was being honest. Maybe I should have been unhappy on my teaching job, asked for a transfer, but I was not unhappy and did not want to leave.

It would appear that if VISTA Volunteers are, in actuality, going to spend a great deal of time giving direct service, rather than serving as community organizers, they should be prepared for this possibility in training. Service should be accorded equal status with organizing. A Volunteer said:

> Training started me thinking about what is a VISTA job. There was too much emphasis on the correct VISTA role. We became too pure about what a VISTA Volunteer should and should not do. This tends to cause frustration on the job. What is needed is a flexible definition of a VISTA job.

The classification of job revealed another important fact. Although most VISTA jobs involve a variety of tasks, they do not necessarily involve more than one dimension. Only 35% of the 111 jobs studied, combined two or more components. By far the largest proportion (65%) revolved around only one dimension. Where several components were combined in one job, the most frequent combination was the bridge function with service to groups.

It is interesting to note that although the majority of VISTA jobs are not rigidly structured a natural demarcation along the lines of social work specialties seems to have taken place. The catalyst is approximately equivalent to the social work community organization model; service to individuals most directly approximates case work (particularly the work of the case aides, although not the trained caseworkers as such),[1] while service to groups is akin to the group work specialty. However, the bridging function, as such, appears to cut across all demarcations and represents a unique structuring around a communication need. Exactly who carried this function prior to the arrival of the VISTA Volunteer, of course, depended on the agency and setting. There appears to be a growing recognition on the part of agencies in urban poverty areas of the need for some persons specifically charged with the "go-between" role. Our study indicates that this role is being assigned to VISTA Volunteers as well as to indigenous neighborhood workers.

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[1] It should be noted that none of the Volunteers in our sample are involved in a traditional psychotherapeutic relationship with their clients.

Tasks Performed by Volunteers

We have seen that VISTA jobs, when categorized according to their principal components, fall into several models roughly classified as service model, bridging model, community organization model or combinations thereof. However, another way to approach what VISTA Volunteers do is to analyze their jobs from a task point of view. Are there certain tasks performed by most Volunteers regardless of the nature of their job (i.e. bridge, service etc.)? A generic task analysis is particularly germane to training considerations and forms the basis for curriculum building.

Each Volunteer was presented with a list of 19 tasks (or program skills) commonly involved in the helping process, and was asked to indicate whether he or she spent a great deal of time, some time, very little time or no time at all performing the given tasks. In the table below, these tasks have been grouped according to major activity headings. It is recognized, however, that certain tasks, such as home visits or interviewing, cut across activity headings and could be placed under several headings.

TABLE 19 -- Tasks Performed by VISTA Volunteers in Course of Work

TASKS	PER CENT OF VOLUNTEER TIME INVOLVED		
	Great Deal of Time	Some Time	Little or No Time
I. Program			
Tasks involved in bridging and organization of groups:			
Making home visits[*]	40.6	36.0	23.4
Organizing or assisting in the organization of a group.[**]	33.3	33.4	33.3
Interviewing	30.6	32.4	37.0
Contacting community groups and recruiting from them	18.9	34.2	46.9
Tasks involving direct service to individuals:			
Giving direct help to individuals; counseling, intervention	45.1	29.7	25.2
Escort to hospital, clinics, etc	12.6	24.3	63.1
Intake receptionist (store fronts)	6.3	15.3	78.4
Tasks involving direct service to groups:			
Leading or assisting a group:			
Children	35.1	18.0	46.9
Adults	19.8	17.1	63.1
Old age	3.6	4.5	91.9
Escorting group on trip	18.9	41.5	39.6
Tutoring	25.2	21.6	53.2

[*] This function could also be placed under service to groups or individuals but has been placed here because Volunteers are frequently involved in outreach activity.

[**] Although many of these groups are tenant and block associations involved in community action, some of the groups organized were children's groups, mother's clubs, etc., whose goals were individual betterment. These latter groups usually involved the Volunteers attached to settlement houses. It must be remembered that only 23% of the Volunteers were involved in community organization.

TABLE 19 -- Continued

TASKS	PER CENT OF VOLUNTEER TIME INVOLVED		
	Great Deal of Time	Some Time	Little or No Time
Teaching or assisting teacher:			
Pre-school	13.5	3.6	82.9
School age	8.1	2.7	89.2
Adults	11.7	5.4	82.9
Camping	3.6	9.0	87.4
II. Administrative, Planning, Clerical			
Attending meetings and conferences	34.2	43.3	22.5
Planning new services, programs	21.6	44.2	34.2
Writing logs, reports	15.3	34.2	50.5
Clerical work	9.0	24.3	66.7
Writing releases, publicity	9.0	15.3	75.7
Compiling list of community resources	5.4	16.2	78.4

The above table illustrates the wide range of tasks involved in the jobs of VISTA Volunteers in urban poverty. Certain tasks, however, are likely to be performed by most Volunteers, while others are restricted to fewer Volunteers in specialized situations.

A rank ordering of the tasks according to the proportion of the 111 Volunteers performing them at least some of the time indicates the following clusters:

Per Cent of Volunteers Performing Task
(Some or a Great Deal of Time)

Three quarters or more of Volunteers

Making home visits.
Counseling, intervention, advocacy for client.

Two-thirds or more of Volunteers

Organizing a group (either social action or individual self-betterment).

Half or more of Volunteers

Interviewing.
Leading a group, most commonly children or young people.
Contacting community groups, recruiting.
Escorting a group on a trip.

One-third or more of Volunteers

Tutoring.
Escort service to hospitals, clinics.

Less than one-third

Intake, receptionist.
Teaching or assisting teacher.
Camping.

There appear to be certain program skills that are germane to most jobs regardless of their focus or setting. In training VISTA Volunteers for work in urban poverty agencies, some elementary exposure to the process of organizing groups and to the skills involved in group leadership and maintenance is essential. Hopefully trainees at the conclusion of six weeks of training will have had experience in making home visits and will be able to informally interview and/or talk with clients about specific needs or problems. In addition, Volunteers need to know something about how to counsel, or intervene in behalf of a client, and how to contact the community and its organizations in the process of recruiting for programs. (It is recognized that program skills increase with job experience, but since so high a proportion of Volunteer time is spent on these tasks, at least a rudimentary introduction seems essential during training.) Of somewhat less importance appears to be tutoring skills (although almost 50% of the Volunteers did some tutoring) and teaching experience in a formal educational setting.

A needed concomitant to basic program skills is the ability to creatively plan and initiate action. Approximately two-thirds of the Volunteers in our sample spent some or a great deal of their time in planning new services or programs. Most Volunteers also reported attending meetings and conferences, and many were called upon to keep logs or write records. It is interesting to note that clerical work, as such, does not figure prominently in their work loads.

To summarize the picture of the typical VISTA jobs in urban poverty, some of the Columbia trained VISTA Volunteers spent their time organizing community groups for social action, but many more had jobs involving direct service to individuals or groups. The bridging function also proved to be important. In the training of VISTA Volunteers it is essential to portray the several components of the urban VISTA job. Although organizing tenant groups and protest meetings is involved in many jobs, it is by no means the only VISTA role. Service including counseling, intervention and the leadership of self-betterment groups (i.e. sewing clubs, recreation groups, etc.) takes as much or probably more of the VISTA Volunteer's time. Urban VISTAS , according to our findings, act as helpers and teachers in the social competence model as well as catalysts in the social power model. They are rarely involved in psychotherapeutic intervention.

There are certain tasks performed by most VISTAS whether the Volunteer is a service agent, carrying a bridge function or working as a community organizer. Included are home visiting, interviewing, elementary group organization and leadership, listening to a client's problems and acting appropriately on their behalf and recruiting for programs. All Volunteers need some training in the skills required to perform these tasks. Of extreme importance is exposure to community resources and the encouragement of initiative and creative planning by the Volunteer, since so many Volunteers report these as essential parts of their jobs.

Continuity of Job Assignment During First Four Months

The majority of Volunteers in our study (69%) remained on the same job during the first four months and no major changes are projected for the remainder of the service year. In some cases, additional duties were added as Volunteers became able to handle more responsibility, but movement from job to job was rare. In a minority of cases, the job planned by the Sponsor proved unrealistic and had to be restructured to fit Volunteer capabilities.

Considering that agencies received little advance information about the Volunteers and had to match people and assignments under considerable time pressure, it is surprising that more changes in job assignments did not occur. It may be that once an assignment is made, a certain inertia sets in, and that unless there is acute difficulty, accomodation takes place instead of change. This, of course, makes even more important careful matching of Volunteer qualifications and job requirements in the first few days. One large agency purposely withholds specific assignments until the Volunteers have had a chance to learn about various possibilities and express some preference as to type of work.

Client Population

The 111 Volunteers in this study, assigned to urban settings, worked primarily with Negro clients. More than half the Volunteers worked solely with Negroes, while for another 16%, Negroes predominated. About 23% worked equally with both Negroes and whites (and occasionally Puerto Ricans), 7% with both Negroes and Puerto Ricans. Only 4% worked solely with white clients and 3% only with Puerto Ricans. The following table shows the ethnic distribution of VISTA clients:

TABLE 20 -- Ethnic Groups With Whom Volunteers Principally Worked

Group	N			%
Negro Only or Predominantly	76			68.5
Negro only		60	54.1	
Negro and Puerto Rican		9	8.1	
Negro and White		7	6.3	
White Only	4			3.6
Puerto Rican Only	3			2.7
Equally With All Groups	25			22.5
No answer	3			2.7
TOTAL	111			100.0

The Volunteers were heavily involved with children. The largest single group, 37%, worked only with children, while another 34% worked with children frequently but also were involved with adults.[1] Only 15% of the Volunteers, on the other hand, worked exclusively with adults.

Supervisors maintain that VISTA Volunteers are particularly effective with those near to them in age. Volunteers report that often the best way to reach adults is to start with the children. All of these factors undoubtedly contribute to the heavy proportion of Volunteers working with young people.

It is hard to tell whether agencies were predisposed to assign Volunteers to work with children or whether many of the poverty programs for which VISTA Volunteers are requested are child-oriented. In any event, considering the youthfulness of the client population of so many Volunteers, it is not surprising that only one-quarter of the VISTA's in our study were involved in community organization activities. It is possible that VISTAS could do equally well with adults if given the chance. (Future reports will try to relate the success of the Volunteer to age of client, among other factors.)

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[1] 14% did not answer the question.

Work Schedule

Regular or Irregular

Although VISTA Volunteers are attached to agencies they are not necessarily treated administratively as other staff. Approximately two-thirds of the Volunteers in our sample report they do not have a regular schedule of work at their agency, but work, instead, irregular hours depending on what has to be done.

Days and Hours

In most sponsoring agencies the normal work week is 35-40 hours (5-day week, 7 or 8 hours) and staff will occasionally work nights, but generally not Saturdays or Sundays (except for specific weekend jobs). To what extent do the Volunteers in our sample approximate or exceed normal agency work schedules?

The following tables show the Volunteers' estimates of the number of days and number of hours per day they work on their agency jobs.

Days Per Week

	% of Volunteers
5 days	60
6 days	32
7 days	8

Hours Per Day

Less than 7 hours	8
7-8 hours	44
9-10 hours	36
11 hours or more	12

The majority of Volunteers, by their own estimates, probably put in no more than usual agency hours on the job. Although VISTA literature does not spell out a minimum work day or work week, it is expected that Volunteers will not be limited by agency hours. In the field, one frequently hears that VISTA's should work as much as 12 hours per day and that they should be available whenever needed.

Evenings

The vast majority of Volunteers work evenings (83%), most usually from two to four nights per week. However, in view of the total number of hours worked per day, it is likely that many get compensatory time off for working nights and come to the agency later in the morning. (In the field visits, flexibility of the Volunteers' agency work schedules was most noticeable; very few Volunteers seemed bound by rigid hours.)

Saturdays and Sundays

Approximately half the Volunteers report they work at least one Saturday per month, but only a little more than one-fourth work regularly on Saturdays. Sunday appears to be a day off for most of the VISTA Volunteers. Only 19% generally work on Sunday and only 37% occasionally work as much as one Sunday or more per month.

Total Hours Per Week

Considering the relatively small proportion of Volunteers who work on Saturdays or Sundays, or who work more than 8 hours per day, it is not surprising to find that about one-third of the Volunteers estimate they work on the job 40 hours or less per week. Another third work from 41 to 50 hours per week and the remaining third work from 51 to 60+ hours.

VISTA Hours Compared with Other Staff

Volunteers and Supervisors were asked to compare the hours worked by the VISTA Volunteers with other agency staff. Both groups agree that the largest group of Volunteers work only about the same number of hours as other agency staff. However, they tend to disagree about the proportion working more or less hours than other staff. Table shows their perceptions.

TABLE 21 -- Hours Worked by VISTA Volunteers in Comparison with Other Agency Staff as Perceived by Volunteers and Supervisors

Hours Worked	Volunteers		Supervisors	
	Number	%	Number*	%
Same................	61	55.0	45	42.4
More................	31	27.9	21	19.8
Less................	13	11.7	20	18.9
NA or DNA...........	6	5.4	20	18.9
TOTAL	111	100.0	106	100.0

*In the case of 5 Volunteers no supervisory interview could be scheduled due to illness. Thus in this and subsequent tables in this section there are only 106 supervisory responses as opposed to 111 Volunteer responses.

Whether or not working the same number of hours in the agency as other staff is enough for a VISTA Volunteer depends on what the Volunteer does in his free time in the neighborhood.

Unlike other staff, most Volunteers live in the same area as their agencies and their contacts with clients and neighbors do not necessarily stop at 5 p.m. A Volunteer whose home is a meeting ground for teenagers on the block may be putting in only 40 hours at his agency but may be a working VISTA Volunteer 60 to 80 hours per week.

To fairly evaluate the hours worked by a VISTA, it is, therefore necessary to combine the time spent in informal assistance to clients and neighbors, and formal job hours. Our records on hours worked within the agency framework are probably accurate but we have only estimates of the amount of informal service offered by the Volunteers. It appears that some Volunteers put in substantial amounts of time working in the neighborhood after agency hours. But there are other Volunteers who work only agency hours and have little VISTA involvement after work except with other Volunteers on a purely social basis. Exactly how many hours urban VISTA Volunteers work should be explored further. It is our impression, however, that in the urban poverty setting, overwork on the part of a VISTA Volunteer is a rare occurrence.

Amount of Work Available to the Volunteers

Hours worked are to a large extent a correlate of the amount of work available to the Volunteer. Although VISTA Volunteers can create their own work, this presupposes a high degree of maturity and work experience.

Most of the VISTAS are young, VISTA respresents their first adult job experience and they are relatively untrained for their jobs.

Initiative in seeking out and creating work may therefore be a great deal to ask of all except a small number of unusual Volunteers. The major responsibility for providing sufficient work rests with the agency and most particularly the Direct Supervisor.

Volunteers and Supervisors were asked about the amount of work available to the Volunteers at the time of the four month field interview, as well as the amount available during the early months on the job.

The following table summarizes their perceptions.

TABLE 22-- Amount of Work Available to Volunteers as Perceived by Volunteers and Supervisors

Amount of Work and Time Period	Respondent			
	Volunteer		Supervisor	
	N	%	N	%
At End of Four Months				
Volunteer had:				
Enough work....................	72	64.9	69	65.1
Too much work..................	11	9.9	13	12.3
Too little work................	16	14.4	16	15.1
Varies--sometimes too much, sometimes too little...........	12	10.8	8	7.5
TOTAL:......................	111	100.0	106	100.0
During First Four Months				
Volunteer had:				
Enough all the time............	32	28.8	43	40.6
Too much all the time..........	5	4.5	11	10.4
Too little all the time........	6	5.4	16	15.1
Too little at some point.......	46	41.5	28	26.4
Varies--sometimes enough or too much, sometimes too little.....	22	19.8	8	7.5
TOTAL:......................	111	100.0	106	100.0

Most striking in the above table is the almost complete unanimity in the perceptions of the Volunteers and Supervisors about the amount of work currently available to the Volunteers. Both groups agree that at the four-month point, 85% of the Volunteers were kept busy most of the time. Approximately two-thirds of the Volunteers had enough work to keep them busy; about 10% had too much work to do, and slightly under 10% had varied work schedules, sometimes too much and sometimes too little. Only 15% of the total group suffered from too little work at the four month period.

However, when it comes to the work load available during the first months on the job, the picture is seen differently by the two groups. Supervisors tend to feel that a higher proportion of the Volunteers had enough work during the early months than do the Volunteers. The Supervisors report that 50% of the Volunteers had enough or too much to do, while the Volunteers feel that only 33% of them had sufficient work. Volunteers report that as high as 47% of the group had definite periods with too little work during the first four months, while the Supervisors feel that only 42% of the Volunteers were underemployed during the early months.[1]

These differences in perception may to some degree reflect Supervisors' unwillingness to admit periods of too little work as reflecting negatively on themselves or on their agencies. There appears, however, to be another more important reason relating to how jobs begin. Experienced professionals are more likely to be aware that beginnings are generally slow on most jobs. Such time-consuming activities as "getting to know other agency personnel," "observing," "reading," "listening" are considered essential parts of the adjustment period in most agencies, and not likely to be seen as non-productive (or non-work) periods by Supervisors. The Volunteers, on the other hand, had just completed six weeks of training and were impatient to get right to work. They wanted to go out into the community and see results. Slow pacing and agency indoctrination were difficult for them to accept and were seen, in many cases, as non-productive periods of "too little work".

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[1] The differences in perceptions are statistically significant.

Our field trips indicated that these differences in perceptions were a cause of initial friction between Supervisors and Volunteers. As time went on, however, Volunteers more readily comprehended slow beginnings. It is interesting to note that in the four month interviews, few Volunteers blamed agency inefficiency for lack of work. The largest number (33 Volunteers or 64% of those mentioning too little work) indicated that any period without work was due principally to the slow start of the job or to the inherent nature of the work.

There appear to be several possible work patterns during the first months on the job. A sizeable group of Volunteers will be given enough work right from the beginning (by their own and their Supervisors' standards). Others will be assigned to jobs, (frequently community organization) where the nature of the work results in variable work loads, sometimes too much work, sometimes too little. But a substantial group of Volunteers may be faced with slow beginnings on the job and definite periods of too little work (although Supervisors may consider this lack of direct activity as part of getting adjusted). In some cases agencies will fail to adequately think through the jobs of the Volunteers prior to their arrival. At other times, Volunteers will show little interest or initiative in doing the tasks assigned or in reaching out for more work. Whatever the cause, it appears essential to discuss in training the possibilities of slow starts or too little work at the beginning. Through such discussions, Volunteers can be better prepared for reality. Potential frustration and friction can be lessened. Trainees can, of course, be reassured that in most cases VISTA Volunteers in urban poverty will have enough work by the end of three or, at most, four months on the job.

Advance Preparation by Sponsors Prior to Arrival of Volunteers

Slow starts are to some extent a reflection of the kind of advance preparation done by the sponsor prior to the Volunteers' arrival. Sponsors are urged by VISTA Washington to define job tasks in advance,[1] arrange for temporary housing, alert Supervisors, inform boards of directors and community about the Volunteers and set up the necessary agency orientation programs. Our evidence indicates that when advance planning was adequate, the transition for both Volunteers and agencies was smooth, while considerable friction occurred in those instances where Volunteers arrived on too short notice and/or agencies had not done sufficient advance planning. Although the problems usually were cleared up by the four-month period, in some cases there was a definite residue of resentment which could have been at least alleviated by better advance planning.

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[1] Although agencies submit job descriptions when they request Volunteers, many are general. Often, considerable time has elapsed between the proposal stage and the actual arrival of Volunteers, necessitating a second examination of the suggested jobs.

Persons Involved in Advance Planning and Key Questions Raised

In most cases, decisions on the appropriate use of VISTA Volunteers were made by the top personnel of the agency (with or without the help of the Board of Directors). Only one-third of the Direct Supervisors were involved in any VISTA planning prior to the arrival of the Volunteers. The most frequent questions raised by sponsors during their advance planning were the following: (in rank order of mention)

--What work would the Volunteers be suited for--how could they be incorporated into existing programs or in new programs?

--What type of people would VISTA Volunteers be--their backgrounds and levels of skill and training?

--What status should the Volunteer have in the agency--how would they relate to other neighborhood workers?

--What kind of growth experience could the agency offer Volunteers?

--Would the Volunteers be accepted by the staff and community--would they be considered outsiders or beatniks?

--What were VISTA guidelines on the use of Volunteers?

Sufficiency of Advance Planning as Perceived by Volunteers

Volunteers are usually unaware of the amount of administrative planning undertaken by a sponsor prior to their arrival but judge only by what happens to them on the spot. The Volunteers in our study apparently experienced sufficient dislocation at the time of arrival to make them highly critical of the advance planning undertaken by their sponsoring agencies. Over half the Volunteers felt their agencies had not done sufficient planning and were quite verbal in indicating what more should have been done.

Their responses are not only pertinent to future planning, but underscore the types of problems faced by the Volunteers during their first days on the job. The largest group of suggestions (of what more could have been done) revolved around the preparation of adequate job assignments in advance of arrival. Included were such things as having specific plans on how to use the Volunteers; preparing the agency staff and Supervisors for the Volunteers' arrival; seeing that available jobs were permanent and not temporary makeshift arrangements and insuring that adequate job descriptions were drawn up in advance.

Following closely the desirability of careful job planning was the need for housing assistance - either providing temporary housing or information on available permanent housing. Over half of the Volunteers had difficulty finding housing on arrival and 38% felt they got no help whatsoever from their agencies in this critical area.

Other areas needing more advance planning were orientation of Volunteers to agency and community and alerting the community and other

VISTAS to the arrival of new Volunteers.

Several Volunteers mentioned the difficulty of arriving during the summer months when agencies tend to temporarily slow down. Fresh from training and anxious to work, Volunteers found it hard to come to a relatively inactive agency with much of the staff on vacation. (Many Volunteers arrive during the summer and some special note should be made of the effect of summer slowdown on Volunteer morale.)

Changes in Level of Agency Preparation Over Time

Some slight improvement in the adequacy of advance planning, as perceived by the Volunteers, occurred as the year went on. As high as 70% of the Volunteers in Columbia III and V[1] were critical of advance preparation by the sponsors, while the critical proportion dropped to around 50% in the cases of Columbia VI and VII. However, a critical evaluation by half the Volunteers in any one cycle appears to indicate that the whole question of advance preparation by agencies needs closer examination.

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[1] In the case of Columbia IV, the pattern of response to the question was somewhat different. Only 35% of the class complained about insufficient advance planning, while 65% felt their agencies had done sufficient work in this area. The sponsoring agencies in the cycle covered a similar range of types of agencies; thus type of agency does not appear to be the causation factor in this difference.

Sponsors React to Need for Advance Planning

Sponsoring agencies, in many cases, recognized that more should have been done with respect to advance planning. In conversations with 32 of the 43 sponsors in our study, the inherent problems in getting ready for Volunteers were explored. Eighteen felt that their agencies had done sufficient advance planning, but 14 definitely felt more could have been done.

One of the overriding reasons given for insufficiency of preparation was the timing of arrival of Volunteers. Many agencies, particularly in the early part of the year, complained that the Volunteers arrived without enough advance notice, making adequate preparation impossible (in a few cases it was noted that the agency had not even been notified officially of acceptance of their proposal for VISTA Volunteers). The problem was described by the head of a large agency as follows:

> We knew what we wanted to do with the Volunteers--who would supervise them--had the Supervisors ready. This is all we could do because we never knew when they would show up. If we had known in advance that 12 Volunteers were coming on such and such a date, we might have been able to line up housing for them, prepare a reception for them. However, I just got a call from Washington one Friday and was told your 4 Volunteers will be coming on Sunday. I didn't even know whether they were coming by train or plane.

Another agency head said:

> We received the VISTAS in the middle of the summer with one day notice. We provided some orientation about the city using a few staff members who were on hand. Began an apartment hunt. It was a bad way to start a program. When the staff returned they received further orientation.

Sponsors also cited the difficulty of receiving Volunteers over a staggered time period, one or two at a time. In such cases, it was impossible to utilize planned orientation programs or retain the housing which had been secured.

The sponsors, in their conversations, made the following suggestions with regard to better advance preparation and training of Volunteers (in order of frequency of comment). Some of the suggestions are within the province of sponsors, but others require action by VISTA Washington or Regional Offices:

- --Advance notice by Washington about arrival of Volunteers.
- --More attention to housing, particularly temporary.
- --More adequate information on each assigned Volunteer (possibly a profile).
- --More knowledge about the training of the Volunteers; the elimination of Volunteers straggling in in twos and threes.
- --More preparation by agency with community--alerting boards, other agencies as to arrival of Volunteers.
- --More discussion ahead of time with agency staff in the various subdivisions on how best to absorb and use Volunteers.
- --Use of present Volunteers in orientation of new VISTAS.
- --Spreading of orientation over a longer period--a few hours per week rather than all in first day. As Volunteers are in the agency longer they can ask more pertinent questions and get more from such training.

With the projected regionalization of VISTA services, many of these suggestions can be easily handled. However, it is interesting to note that the area of greatest complaint by Volunteers, the adequate preparation of job assignments, is rarely mentioned by the sponsors. It is possible that sponsors do not recognize how important it is for the Volunteer to feel that his job is well-defined ahead of time. Most Volunteers are young and inexperienced and struggling for some certainty. They cannot carve out jobs for themselves; when forced to make their own jobs they tend to feel inadequate, become frustrated, and complain about lack of work. It might be well for an agency to have certain specific tasks available for new Volunteers upon arrival, jobs that can give an immediate sense of doing something. Then, as the Volunteer gets roots in the neighborhood and job, more self-directed expansion of scope can become a reality. However, it is important to appraise Volunteers at the beginning of the projected job progression. They need to be reassured that, as time goes on, they will be able to move out independently.

The experience of a large Midwestern agency is relevant. Upon arrival, the Volunteers were assigned as outreach workers and under minimum supervision left to develop their own jobs. The result was frustration and inactivity. The agency, recognizing the problem, assigned the Volunteers to more structured, defined jobs within a building centered program. The Volunteers thrived. By the four-month field visit, Volunteers were once again reaching out, this time from a base of success, and were gradually becoming the outreach workers originally envisioned.

On-the-Job Training

Columbia trained VISTA Volunteers came to their jobs fresh from six weeks of generic training. In this training, they were exposed to poverty, the general functioning of social agencies, some techniques of working with individuals and groups and some of the more common helping tasks. But they received little or no advance information about their prospective sponsoring agency, its programs, philosophy or goals. And their training fieldwork placement may not have been comparable to the type of agency they are going to or their specific job assignment.

Thus in many cases, there was a considerable gap between the generic training received at Columbia and the specific information they needed to know in order to function effectively in their new sponsoring agency. How is this gap closed? What training and/or orientation do sponsoring agencies offer when VISTA Volunteers arrive on the job?

Many of the Volunteers in our sample were critical of the training offered by their sponsors. The facts indicate some justification for these negative feelings.

Amount Offered

Not all agencies, by any means, offered training to newly arrived Volunteers. Volunteers and Direct Supervisors were queried on whether or not their agencies offered training and/or orientation. Usually, when both groups are asked the same question, the pattern of responses tends to be similar; not so with respect to whether or not Volunteers received training upon arrival.

As shown in Table 23 below, Volunteers and Supervisors had very different perceptions about what happened. According to Volunteers, only 55% received any training or orientation; Supervisors contend that 73% of the Volunteers were trained by the agency at the time of arrival.

TABLE 23-- Volunteers Receiving Agency Training on Arrival According to Volunteers and Supervisors

Was Training Given?	Supervisors (Per Cent)	Volunteers (Per Cent)	Percentage Difference in Response
Yes	72.6	55.0	+16
No	25.5	45.0	-23
No Answer	1.9	--	+2
Total	100.0	100.0	

The exact cause of this discrepancy is unknown. Our hypothesis is that it represents a difference in perception of what constitutes training. Volunteers, fresh from a formal training program, apparently equated informal orientation with an absence of training. Supervisors, on the other hand, probably were willing to count informal introductions to agency staff and job as training, (even when not formally labeled as such by the agency).

The value of agency training, however, is psychological as well as practical. The supportive aspect cannot be discounted. The fact that as high as 55% of the Volunteers felt they got no training or orientation before commencing work is highly significant. Its absence was felt by a sizeable group of the "untrained"; more than half felt that some training or orientation would have been helpful.

Staff Involved in Training

When given, agency training was usually a special program planned for the VISTA Volunteers, and not part of the ongoing agency training plan for all staff. Overwhelmingly, therefore, VISTAS were trained only with other VISTAS. If there were insufficient numbers of Volunteers arriving in a group to warrant formal training, orientation tended to become haphazard and was handled informally by Supervisors, contributing, no doubt, to the feeling on the part of a sizeable group of Volunteers that they received no real training.

Several levels of agency personnel participated in the training given, as shown in Table 24 . The Volunteers tended to be exposed to top administrative staff as well as to their Direct Supervisors. To a lesser extent, representatives from other agencies were included in the training.

TABLE 24--Who Was Involved in Training
(Based on Supervisory Answers)

Persons Involved	Frequency* Number	Frequency* Per Cent
Immediate Supervisor	26	33.8
Staff generally	23	30.0
Director of agency	19**	24.7
Representative of other agencies	10	13.0
Person in agency responsible for all VISTA Volunteers	7	9.1
Training director of agency	2	2.6

*Responses total more than 100% because in some cases, several persons participated in training.

**Included in this figure are 6 cases in which the Director of the Agency, the only paid staff, was also the Direct Supervisor of the Volunteers.

Length of Training Period

The length of time devoted to training varied according to the agency. The largest group of Volunteers, however, participated in programs lasting from three to seven days. If length of time is any criterion differentiating training from mere orientation, most of the Volunteers who say they received training appear to have been given full-fledged training rather than mere orientation.

TABLE 25-- Length of Training Received by Volunteers (according to Volunteers)

Length of Training	Number	Per Cent
1 or 2 days	9	14.8
3 to 7 days	28	45.9
2 weeks	11	18.0
3 weeks	2	3.3
4 weeks	2	3.3
More than 1 month	1	1.6
No answer	8	13.1
Total	41	100.0

Content

As noted, agency training was most frequently done in groups including Volunteers who might have very different job assignments within the agency. According to Supervisors, group sessions tended to stress more general subjects such as agency policies, the neighborhood and its people and other agencies with whom Volunteers might work. Specifics of job, personnel practices and techniques of working with people were frequently left to individual Supervisors to handle on a one-to-one basis. (This was undoubtedly how these topics were handled in the case of the "untrained" Volunteers.) On-the-job instruction was also seen as a more appropriate way of teaching techniques of working with people; perhaps trainers preferred to learn how much previous experience the Volunteers had before plunging into this difficult area of training. For some reason, orientation to the city, its government and policies was not widely included in agency training.

It is interesting to note that most of the trained Volunteers felt that the training given by their agencies covered entirely new material or some new material. Duplication of Columbia training, however, was not considered a waste of time, even in those few cases where it existed. In general, agency training was considered helpful.

In summary it appears that agency training, in addition to prior VISTA training, was considered important by both Volunteers and Supervisors. Considering the generic nature of most VISTA training, it is hard to see how it can be overlooked. Yet approximately 45% of the Volunteers in our study felt that they received no training and even Supervisors acknowledge that upward of 25% of the Volunteers were probably thrown into their jobs without any orientation or training by their sponsoring agencies. In all likelihood, most of the Volunteers who received no formal training eventually picked up information about the agency, its policies and its practices through Supervisors and other agency staff. But considering the pressures of VISTA life and the newness of the job, some semblance of training or orientation on arrival would seem appropriate, if only for psychological reasons.

Comparative Use of VISTA Volunteers

Social welfare services have expanded greatly in recent years and trained helping personnel are increasingly in short supply. New types of manpower have been explored by private and public agencies across the country. Indigenous people have been hired from the target population for a variety of sub-professional jobs, college graduates have been used in beginning social work positions, and the use of volunteers has been extended.

Although VISTA was not originally conceived as a manpower stop-gap, expanded staff for urban social agencies has become an important by-product of the VISTA effort. It is therefore pertinent to consider how VISTA Volunteers compare with other agency personnel. Do they perform similar jobs? Do they require more or less supervision, and is more or less expected of them by Supervisors? Are there some functions in urban poverty for which VISTA Volunteers are uniquely suited? Such questions were put both to the Volunteers and to their Direct Supervisors.

Volunteers Doing Work Similar to Other Staff

VISTA Volunteers in some agencies comprise the entire staff of the agency and/or the program they man. In most urban agencies, however, they are only a portion of the agency work force. In twelve agencies of our study, the Volunteers were the entire staff, except for an agency head and/or supervisor;[1] in 31 agencies, VISTA joined professionals, neighborhood aides, volunteers and social work students in bringing agency programs to clients. The staff complements in these agencies ranged from as few as two persons in the smallest agencies to thousands in the larger organizations. It is more than possible, therefore, that some VISTA Volunteers would be doing similar or the same types of work

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[1] See Appendix III for list of these agencies.

(jobs or tasks) as other regular members of the agency work force (excluding VISTA Volunteers).

Volunteers and Supervisors alike reported that a sizeable proportion of the urban Volunteers in our study do the same or similar work as other staff. Considering only Volunteers in agencies with other staff,[1] anywhere from 52% of the Volunteers (according to the Volunteers) to 70% (according to the Supervisors) perform similar tasks to at least one other category of agency personnel. This may seem high. It is necessary, however, to remember the highly structured nature of many urban agencies and the fact that VISTA Volunteers were often completely integrated into the total manpower plan of the agency. In rural, migrant and Indian VISTA, the situation may well be different.

Type of Agency Personnel Doing Similar Work

We have indicated that in the case of over half of the Volunteers, other agency staff members do similar work. What are their job titles? In 25 cases, Volunteers are doing the same work as professionals; in 23 cases, as sub-professionals (neighborhood aides, group work or case work aides); in 12 cases, as non-VISTA volunteers; in 2 cases as social work students, and in 4 cases as all other staff.

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[1] Twenty-two Volunteers worked in agencies or programs in which they were the only staff except a Supervisor.

TABLE 2[illegible]-- Types of Staff to Whom VISTA Volunteers Do Similar Work as Reported by Supervisors*

Category of Staff	Volunteers	
	Number	Per Cent
Professional	26	44.8
Sub-professional (aides, etc.)	23	39.7
Volunteers	12	20.7
All staff	4	6.9
Social work students	2	3.4
Total Volunteers doing similar work	58	100.0

*The total number of responses exceeds 58 or 100% because in some cases, Volunteers did work similar to more than one category of staff.

Treatment of VISTA Volunteers and Other Staff Doing Similar Work

Supervisors were asked to compare their treatment of VISTA Volunteers and other agency personnel doing similar work with respect to the following dimensions: amount of responsibility on the job, amount of supervision, type of supervision and amount of work expected.

Unfortunately, the numbers in some of the comparative categories of agency personnel are very small so that statistically significant statements in all cases are hard to make. Therefore, the responses should be seen as trends until such time in the future as a similar exploration is made with a larger sample population.

With respect to professionals, the largest category of agency personnel doing similar work, the comparisons indicate that:

--Supervisors give VISTA Volunteers less responsibility on the job than professionals in two-thirds of the cases.

--In almost half the cases, Volunteers need more supervision and closer supervision than do the professionals, but in the other half of the cases, supervision needed by both groups is about the same.

--With respect to amount of work expected, Supervisors are split almost three ways; one-third expect more of the Volunteers than of the professionals, slightly over one-third expect the same amount, and slightly under one-third expect less work.

The amount of responsibility for decision-making on the job appears to be the factor that most differentiates professionals from VISTA Volunteers. In two-thirds of the cases, VISTA Volunteers are accorded less responsibility.

Considering the fact that we are comparing relatively untrained VISTA Volunteers with professionally trained personnel, some of the other responses may seem surprising. For example, only half the Volunteers needed more supervision than the professionals. In most cases, however, VISTA Volunteers do the same work as beginning professionals who, though better trained, have little experience and similarly need close supervision. In addition, the Volunteers in our study were apparently very able to accept supervision and did not require an excessive amount of supervisory time even when compared with professional staff.

Perhaps more striking is the finding that about one-third of the Supervisors expected more work of the VISTA Volunteers than of the professionals doing similar tasks. It appears that some agency administrative personnel accept the premise that VISTA Volunteers are more committed, more dedicated and willing to work harder and longer than other staff. They therefore tend to have higher work expectations for VISTA Volunteers than for their own professionals.

When VISTA Volunteers are compared with neighborhood or case aides or with other types of volunteers, we find that Supervisors accord VISTAS a somewhat more professional status. They are given considerably more responsibility on the job and need slightly less supervision of a less close nature. Supervisors expect slightly (though not excessively) more work from the Volunteers than from other sub-professional staff and volunteers.

VISTA Volunteers as Professionals

Although VISTA Volunteers appear in some cases to be doing the same work as professionals and are treated more like professionals than any other category of agency staff, they should not be confused with professionals. Except for a small group of very talented Volunteers, most VISTAS perform at less than a professional level. Supervisors, themselves professionals, may be somewhat biased in their appraisal of the level of VISTA functioning. But observations and conversations with many persons connected with the Volunteers seem to substantiate their judgements. When asked whether, in general, the Volunteers perform most of their job functions at or near the professional level, (a level of responsibility carried by a person generally hired for a professional job in this agency), at a sub-professional level (a trained aide level, assisting a professional person or carrying a job normally carried by a professional worker but with responsibilities restricted), or at a routine level (routine or clerical work), Supervisors responded as follows:

TABLE 27 -- Level of Work Performed by Volunteers (according to Supervisors)

Level	Number	Per Cent
Professional	36	34.0
Sub-professional	65	61.3
Routine	4	3.8
No Answer	1	.9
Total	106	100.0

It should be noted that although most Volunteers were functioning at a sub-professional level, almost one-third of the group were considered by their Supervisors to be functioning at a professional level. Even if this figure is slightly inflated, it is quite remarkable.

The Volunteers, however, recognize differences between themselves and the professionals. When asked in what ways they were less effective in helping the poor than other agency staff, they pointed to their own lack of knowledge and experience and their lessened ability to make crucial decisions of their own. These are, of course, at the root of professional training.

Although classifying VISTA Volunteers in relation to other staff is a difficult and perhaps unrewarding task, the foregoing discussion points to several conclusions about the relative position of the Volunteers in urban agencies. Except for a small minority, they do not function as full-fledged professionals no matter what definition of "professional" their sponsoring agencies use. They lack training and experience, generally need slightly more careful supervision and are not given professional responsibility. On the other hand, because they are college-trained, come from the middle class and have a different kind of commitment to the work, they are not similar to the usual indigenous sub-professional neighborhood aides, community workers, etc. Neither can they be compared with other volunteers. It appears that they fall on the manpower scale at what sometimes is called a pre-professional level--just below full-fledged professionals. Such a level envisions exploration prior to entering professional training. VISTA is, for many Volunteers, an introduction to the helping professions. The number of former VISTA Volunteers already taking professional training in psychology, education and social work tends to bear out this hypothesis. In practice, apparently, agency personnel sense this inbetween nature of VISTA Volunteers and when they do similar work to either professionals or sub-professionals, they are accorded an inbetween, pre-professional status.

Supervision

Each agency receiving a VISTA Volunteer is required to assign a member of its staff to act as Supervisor for the Volunteer. When the agency at which the Volunteer works is small, the Director often serves as Supervisor. In larger agencies operating in many areas or involved in a variety of activities, the Volunteer's Supervisor is generally the head of a particular unit or sub-branch of the agency.

The 111 VISTA Volunteers in our study are supervised by a total of 77 Direct Supervisors: in several cases, one Supervisor is responsible for several Volunteers. The Supervisors in our sample are divided about equally between men and women. They are comparatively young; almost three-quarters are under 40 years of age and almost one-third are under 30. Most have completed graduate school. About 40% received graduate training in social work; about 20% in education; 13% in the social sciences and the others in such diverse areas as the humanities, law, the ministry, science, business and engineering. By and large, the Supervisors are in the upper administrative echelons of their respective agencies; about two-thirds report that salary-wise they are in the top quarter of the agency staff.

The amount and type of supervision that the Direct Supervisors provide varies, depending on the philosophy of the Supervisor and the agency, the type of job and the needs of the Volunteer. Volunteers and Supervisors were asked a series of questions pertaining to various facets of supervision. Their responses in general show a positive picture of constructive supervision well received by the Volunteers.

Amount of Supervision

In general, a considerable amount of supervision was available to the Volunteers in our study. About one-third of the Volunteers report very frequent contact with their Supervisors; they discuss their work daily at least. About half the Volunteers report less frequent but considerable contact, talking with their Supervisors at least a few times per week. A small group of Volunteers, however, about 18%, have infrequent contact with Supervisors, meeting less than once a week. Supervisory meetings are both scheduled and unscheduled. The most frequent type is the informal get-together occurring spontaneously as the need arises. The Volunteers are usually included in any agency staff meeting held by their Unit Supervisors.

Ninety-five per cent of the Volunteers feel that their Supervisors are available and can be reached within a reasonable time if needed.

Type of Supervision

In assisting Volunteers to carry out their VISTA assignments, two levels of decision-making can be distinguished: what tasks are to be done and how these tasks are to be carried out. In general, the 77 Supervisors were intimately involved in the prime decision-making about what jobs the Volunteer was to do. Forty-four per cent of the Supervisors report that they alone determined the tasks and 37% said they worked jointly with the Volunteers in formulating appropriate tasks. Only 13% left task decisions up to the Volunteer alone.

As for details of how the job is to be carried out, Supervisors report that they are less involved and allow the Volunteers more leeway. Only 16% alone determine the details of the job; almost half work jointly with the Volunteer in outlining the details of how to carry out the job, while one-fourth allow the Volunteer complete freedom to decide the details.

The Volunteers do not seem to feel the large role that the Supervisors play in the task determination limits their freedom to do things on their own. Almost all the Volunteers felt they received at least some opportunity to act on their own. About two-thirds reported almost unlimited opportunity to initiate and carry through projects or ideas of their own.

It appears that most of the Supervisors have worked out a combination of sufficient structuring to insure boundaries and enough freedom to allow the Volunteer to have a sense of independent functioning. It is important to note that this happy state does not entail complete freedom. Where supervision was weak and ineffectual or where none existed, Volunteers invariably were unhappy. It is interesting to note that only 14% of the Supervisors described the supervision they gave Volunteers as very loose, while another 15% called their supervision very close. The vast majority (67%,) by their own definition, provided moderate supervision, neither very close nor very loose.

Relationships between Supervisors and Volunteers

The majority of Volunteers and Supervisors seem to have established a positive working relationship. When asked to describe their relationship with each other, a majority of both groups chose the words "close" or "friendly". Table 28 shows their responses.

TABLE 28 -- Type of Supervisory Relationship as Seen by Volunteers and Direct Supervisors

Descriptive Phrases	Responses	
	% Volunteers	% Supervisors
Very warm; close	41.4	34.9
Friendly but not really close	38.7	44.4
Neutral; we work together	12.6	9.4
Not too warm; we have our problems	2.9	5.7
Quite poor; we have real difficulty	4.5	.9
No answer	--	4.7
Total	100.0	100.0

The strength of the Volunteers' feelings for their Supervisors is considerable; 41% feel very warm and close to them while another 39% feel definitely friendly toward them. VISTA Volunteers are cut off from usual avenues of support (family, friends, familiar environment,) and a Supervisor can be an extremely important focal point in their lives. Many Volunteers socialize with Supervisors after hours; the youth of many of the Supervisors helps to make this possible. When given a list of people or things that could help a VISTA Volunteer function, the second highest ranking was accorded "my immediate Supervisor." They were considered by the Volunteers to be second only to the Volunteers' own inner strength and conviction as a source of help.

One Volunteer describes his need of a Supervisor this way:

> When I get depressed or need help I turn to my minister (the project sponsor and Supervisor of Volunteers.) My minister is an extremely good man. I see him every morning before I start on my home visits. I just like to talk things over

> with him. You need a good Supervisor, someone to talk to; other VISTAS help, but they aren't enough. If it weren't for Reverend T. helping me think through what-I-do-next kinds of things, it would be impossible. But he doesn't run my life or tell me what to do; we just work it out together.

Supervisors were aware of the dependency needs of the Volunteers, although some were initially surprised at their strength and intensity. In many cases, time needs to be allowed in the supervisory relationship for a surrogate parent role.

Knowledge and Skills Possessed by Supervisors

VISTA Volunteers give a year of their lives in service to the poor and most have a strong desire to do something visible and useful in that period. The kind of Supervisor they have can make a difference in what is accomplished and how much the VISTA learns on the job. A Supervisor without understanding of the poor and their needs or without technical skills is unlikely to inspire or instill much respect in a young VISTA Volunteer.

We were interested in finding out how knowledgeable Volunteers felt their Supervisors were with respect to the poor and to the technical skills required for the helping role.

Response to the following questions summarizes the Volunteers' evaluation of their Supervisors on these critical dimensions.

Question: In your opinion, how much understanding does your Supervisor have of the poor and their needs?

Degree of Understanding	Per Cent of Supervisors
Considerable understanding, a real feel for the poor	49.6
Good understanding, knows a lot	27.9
An adequate understanding, enough to get by	12.6
Very little understanding of the poor and their needs	7.2
No real understanding	1.8
No answer	.9

Question: With respect to the degree of job skill and technical know-how exhibited by your Supervisor, would you say he or she has:

Degree of Knowledge	Per Cent of Supervisors
A high degree of technical job skill and knowledge	51.4
An adequate degree	35.1
Only a minimum of technical job skill and knowledge	11.7
No answer	1.8

The great majority of Volunteer gave positive evaluations of their Supervisors' understanding and skill. Fifty per cent chose the top rating for their Supervisors ("considerable understanding, a real feel for the poor.") Twenty-eight per cent said they had a "good understanding, know a lot." Less than 10% were critical of their Supervisors in this essential area.

More than 50% of the Volunteers felt their Supervisors were technically superior and had a high degree of job skill, while one-third considered them adequate. Again, only 12% felt their Supervisors were lacking in essential job skill and technical knowledge.

Overall Reaction to Supervision

The overall reaction to the Supervisors was perhaps far more positive than one might expect. Although it has been hypothesized that inadequate supervision was symptomatic of VISTA, this has definitely not proven to be the case in the urban sample studied.

To summarize their feelings about supervision, the Volunteers were asked to rate the supervision they had received to date on a seven-point scale. The scale and the distribution of ratings is shown below.

In Per Cent

9%	5%	5%	15%	20%	20%	26%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Too Satisfied			Fairly Satisfied			Very Satisfied

Mean Rating: 4.96 Standard Deviation: 1.87

More than 80% of the Volunteerswere at least moderately satisfied with the supervision; 46% were very satisfied (points 6 and 7). The mean rating for the group was 4.96. However, there was a definite group of about 20% of the Volunteers who were not satisfied.

There appear to be several causes of this dissatisfaction. Some Volunteers felt their Supervisors did not have adequate knowledge for the job, others described situations in which the Supervisor did not have sufficient time to give to the Volunteers; and some felt they needed more support and direction from their Supervisors. It is interesting to note that a request for more and better supervision was evident in most of these comments, rather than the more expected complaint about too much supervision or adult interference. What it means to have a bad Supervisor can best be described in the words of a Volunteer:

> The most difficult part of being a VISTA is undoubtedly being involved with a poor Supervisor. I was never given any assistance in any project I began or continued. I was never given any material help...My Supervisor couldn't give me an accurate picture of where I would be working, as he had never been there. He didn't know any of the people. He never once has taken any interest in my projects, never visited at activities. Hence, he has no understanding when I present ideas for new projects. Two things are important to him; one that I hand in a weekly project report so he could back himself up; and 2) whether a project will make trouble. Personally, I like him. As a VISTA Supervisor, he is lost.

With respect to supervision, one further point is worth noting. A considerably larger percentage of Columbia VII (40%) than of the other classes expressed dissatisfaction with supervision. However, the differences between Columbia VII and the other classes with respect to the amount of supervision received, the accessibility of Supervisors or the Volunteers' evaluations of the Supervisors' understanding and skill are not sufficient to explain Columbia VII's greater dissatisfaction.

A possible explanation lies in the type of supervisory experience which Columbia VII received in training. Columbia VII, unlike the other classes, had no experience in field work with supervision by an agency staff member. Their field work supervisors, instead, were core members of the Columbia training staff. Thus, they had no prior experience with supervision in the context of a busy agency and considerable staff pressure. It is possible that the excessively close supervision received in training contrasted sharply with the support given by their Direct Supervisors and resulted in greater dissatisfaction at the four-month point.

The VISTA Volunteers in our study apparently were extremely fortunate with their Supervisors. The warm relationships built up with these helping professionals were of considerable assistance to them and helped make their positive job performance possible. Both Volunteers and Supervisors stress the crucial role of supervision in VISTA. In urban agencies, where structure already exists, and where there are trained professionals, good supervision appears viable. Agencies, however, must be prepared for the amount of supervisory time involved and for the close nature of the supervisory relationship frequently required by young, relatively inexperienced VISTA Volunteers.

There is still another very urgent reason for adequate supervision. That is for the protection of the client and the assurance that there will be built-in continuity of service after the Volunteer leaves. Even where agencies are getting other VISTAS as replacements, they need to be completely aware of what has gone on. Although VISTA Volunteers can be helped to work with continuity in mind, the long-range responsibility rests with the agency and Supervisor.

VISTA Volunteers Make Suggestions About Ways of Work and New Programs

Although VISTA Volunteers are mainly oriented toward clients, they are also members of a sponsoring agency. As such, the Volunteer is a potential force for positive change within the framework of the agency itself. Most VISTAS are not aware of this aspect of the VISTA role when they join.[1] But during training at Columbia, the definition of the VISTA role was broadened to include both service to the poor and friendly critic and possible innovator of change within the agency.

Volunteers were encouraged to make suggestions about ways of work and appropriate services. They were cautioned, however, to temper their suggestions with an understanding of the agency's position and responsibilities and were told to wait until they were accepted by the agency and had proven their worth before making too many criticisms or positive suggestions.

Whether a Volunteer plays a constructive role vis-a-vis agency has to do with his willingness to accept the agency as a force for good and the agency's willingness to accept the VISTA Volunteer as a contributing partner. As noted in Chapter IV, in the case of a majority of the Volunteers, such mutual acceptance appeared to have occurred by the time of the four-month interview. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that the vast majority of the Volunteers tried to be a constructive force in their agencies. According to the Supervisors, 94% of the Volunteers made one or more suggestions to them about ways to improve current methods of work or ideas for new programs to be undertaken by the Volunteers alone or in conjunction with other staff. Most of these suggestions were considered to have been raised in an appropriate manner and involved topics that were within the VISTA Volunteers' frame of reference.

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[1] In fact, most Volunteers come to training with no idea that they will be working closely with an agency and have no conception of what working within an agency structure means.

The Supervisors report that they reacted positively to 80% of the suggestions made by the Volunteers about new programs and positively to more than 90% of the Volunteer suggestions concerning changes in methods of work. More than half of all suggestions made had been implemented at the time of the four-month interview.

There are many examples of new programs suggested by Volunteers. To illustrate with a few:

--A public speaking class for adults in a Settlement House

--A campaign for more lighting in the courts of a Housing Project

--A proposal that VISTA Volunteers be allowed to take a group of schizophrenic adolescents out of the hospital to weekly socials with a neighborhood church youth group[1]

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[1] Up until that point these teenagers were only taken off hospital grounds to movies etc. and never had a chance to meet other young people. The experiment worked so well that it has become an accepted on-going program.

- A babysitting service in a neighborhood so that mothers can attend agency programs
- Vocational guidance program for unwed mothers

Changes in methods of work suggested by Volunteers included:

- Decentralization of distribution of food under commodity plan with neighborhood store fronts as depots
- Not merely inviting Negros to a White church but escorting them there
- Move staff meetings from afternoon to morning and increase number of meetings
- Devise new employment applications and new procedures for interviewing
- Insure that all persons arrested are interviewed for potential bail, not merely those screened by police
- Invite the Educational and Housing Committee of the agency out to the neighborhood (it had never been there before)
- Utilize block workers in training of VISTA Volunteers
- Volunteers should go out with an experienced worker in the afternoons during training, then in last week of training should send Volunteer out alone.

Not all the suggestions made by Volunteers are earthshaking; many conscientious agency people constantly came forth with as good or better ideas. But it is significant that VISTA Volunteers can and do play a positive role with respect to agency functioning. It may well be that the freshness of approach and their slightly unorthodox manner spur agency staff to further critical examination of ways of work.

A Supervisor notes about two young male VISTAS:

> Their ideas, drive and improvisation have made them successful. But they scared the hell out of people in the agency. They have really given this agency a shot in the arm.

Since most of the agencies, according to Volunteers and Supervisors, are genuinely dedicated to serving the poor, it is not surprising that Volunteer ideas for new programs were so frequently put into effect. What is more surprising, perhaps, is that young VISTA Volunteers, often considered to be activist rebels, when given the chance, can come forward with so many workable suggestions within the framework of the agency.

Relationships with Clients

What kind of relationships are essentially middle class, college-trained VISTA Volunteers able to establish with the urban poor? Unfortunately, our research design did not encompass direct interviews with clients on this subject or include extensive observation of Volunteers working with clients. However, from talking with Supervisors and Volunteers in our sample and from informal observation of the Volunteers with their clients, a relationship picture emerges.

Most important to this relationship is the fact that, in general, the Volunteers live in the neighborhood in which they work. Such "living in" allows them to establish direct neighborly interaction with the poor on an informal and standby basis. They stand around and chat, are stopped on the street and seen in the local stores. Their homes are frequently open for casual visiting. The best Volunteers give a feeling of being available all the time and set no limits on what they will listen to or how they will help. Questions of professional appropriateness do not limit them; scrubbing floors or baby-sitting may be as important as intervening with a landlord. As a result, they tend to be seen as neighbors or members of an extended family, rather than as "that outsider--the worker from downtown." Lack of social distance characterizes most VISTA-client relationships.

Relationships are the cornerstone of VISTA service. Even before joining VISTA the Volunteer imagines himself going into a neighborhood and, by the strength of his relationship with the poor, helping alleviate poverty. During training, relationships with the poor continue to be stressed further. As a result, when Volunteers work with clients, they are apt to be more interested in interaction with the client than in the specific help they are giving.

Another important characteristic of VISTA-client relationships stems from their non-professional nature. Volunteers establish a peer relationship with clients. They are young and eager, non-authoritarian and unpressuring. They do not come with answers and use little professional jargon. They are more relaxed about time and do not generally meet on an appointment basis with a specific hourly allotment. Because of the type of work assigned to VISTAS, contacts with clients are frequently in the homes. The initial basis of their approach is an offer of friendship. In contacts with families, they are not as apt to be concerned only with specific problems or areas of attention, as is often the tendency with specialized personnel (e.g. health, child care, truancy, welfare allotment, etc.).

Volunteers do not feel as bound by agency procedures and bureaucracy as other staff. They maintain a strong sense of identification with the clients and are ready to accept the perception of the problem as seen through the eyes of the client. As a result, clients feel the Volunteers understand them and their problems.

VISTA Volunteers usually have considerable free time; they rarely have family ties or obligations in the area in which they work. Personal relationships are important to them and clients fulfill a real need. The relationships between the Volunteers and the clients are frequently two-way. Volunteers, because of their education and background, are effective advocates for clients in the maze of bureaucracy. They also have skills to impart such as tutoring, teaching, the ability to fill out forms, homemaking, etc. On the other hand, the Volunteers are alone in the city without family or friends except for other VISTAS. The clients can and do impart considerable knowledge about life to the young Volunteers and offer them warmth, meals and friendship. These relationships are with elderly people, adults and children. Both Volunteers and clients are frequently intermeshed in a mutually supportive relationship.

Because Volunteers have little money, their life patterns tend to approximate those of their neighbors. However, as role models, many VISTAS help to show particularly teenagers and young adults how it is possible to make the most of what is available. The Volunteers fix up their apartments, organize softball games in empty lots and have music going much of the time. By some standards, they live and dress informally, but most recognize that how they look and act has serious repercussions for their effectiveness as VISTA Volunteers.

VISTA Volunteers are, by and large, serious and committed. Their youth, enthusiasm and willingness to give of themselves is often contagious and is, in any case, attractive to clients and agency people as well. Perhaps their most appealing quality is the directness and honesty of their approach, an openness found too infrequently in more experienced helping personnel.

In summary, the principal qualities that the VISTA Volunteer brings to this relationship with clients are his openness, youth and attractiveness, a lack of social distance, a non-professional posture and his idealism and commitment to a movement larger in scope than any individual, agency or area of the country. Because of these qualities, many VISTA Volunteers are able to reach out and establish relationships with clients and can carry out the specific roles envisioned for a VISTA Volunteer: the bridging role, the catalyst role, the service role, the role of innovator and symbol of mobility and concern.

Most VISTA Volunteers, however, suffer from a lack of theoretical foundation upon which to operate, from a paucity of program skills, and the absence of a long-range perspective. In addition, some Volunteers are still very much involved in the "growing-up process." These limitations can be extremely self-defeating and frustrating unless professional supervision is available.

Many Volunteers recognize their lack of skills and knowledge and it gives them, at times, a sense of impotence. When they cannot cure the global problems of a family or community, frustration may set in.

Approximately half the Volunteers in our sample thought of leaving VISTA at one point during their first four months, although for most, the thought was a fleeting one. VISTA Volunteers are mainly young and idealistic with a desire for immediate progress and a sense of urgency. They will be in the community for only one year and they long for positive results. Sometimes they put this desire for results ahead of the need to develop self-help among the poor. Slow pace and small steps are hard for them to comprehend. In addition, some VISTAS plunge too far and too fast and find themselves over their heads in programs they cannot handle or that require much more than one year for the results to appear.

Without professional supervision to help in problem definition, goal setting and detailed work plan, the Volunteers tend to become bogged down in the enormity of poverty and overwhelmed by the immensity of the problems in the same way as their clients have been overwhelmed. A crucial factor in their success is the ability of a Supervisor to turn the positiveness of their direct relationships with clients into a meaningful plan of long-range service. Without such help, only the most talented VISTA can survive and produce anything worthwhile for the urban poor.[1]

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[1] For a more detailed discussion of VISTA-client relationships, see reprint of paper entitled "VISTA Volunteers and the Poor, a Special Type of Helping Relationship" by Marjorie Cantor, published April, 1967 in VISTA Viewpoints, Office of Research, Planning and Evaluation, Office of the Director, VISTA, Washington.

Are VISTA Volunteers More Effective with Clients than Other Staff?

The foregoing is a brief attempt to catch some of the flavor of the Volunteers as they relate to the poor. Naturally not all Volunteers have such a complete relationship with clients. As previously noted, a majority of the Volunteers in our study perform tasks similar to other agency personnel, usually young professionals. To ascertain the effectiveness of the VISTA Volunteers in their relationships with clients as compared with that of other agency personnel, both Volunteers and Supervisors were asked:

> Are there some ways in which you feel that VISTA Volunteers do a more effective job for clients than other agency staff? Are there some ways in which they are less effective than are other agency personnel?

The following table shows the response patterns of the Volunteers and Supervisors to these questions.

TABLE 29-- Number and Per Cent of Volunteers and Supervisors Who Consider VISTA Volunteers More Effective or Less Effective than Other Agency Staff

Response	Persons Responding			
	Volunteers		Supervisors	
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
More Effective				
Yes	80	72.1	46	61.4
No	25	22.5	19	25.3
Not Sure	3	2.7	1	1.3
Did Not Answer	3	2.7	9	12.0
Total	111	100.0	75	100.0
Less Effective				
Yes	80	72.1	46	61.3
No	27	24.3	15	20.0
Not Sure	2	1.8	2	2.7
Did Not Answer	2	1.8	12	16.0
Total	111	100.0	75	100.0

A majority of both groups felt that there were ways in which VISTA Volunteers were more effective than other staff and areas in which they had limitations. (Slightly more Volunteers than Supervisors noted differences between the Volunteers and other staff, both of a positive and negative nature.)

In answering these questions, both Volunteers and Supervisors tended to intermingle examples of more or less effective behavior with perceptions of causation. As a result, the responses were categorized both ways, i.e., the behavior was noted and then classified under headings indicating the main causes of the behavior. Some answers overlapped, of course, and a numerical count of the various responses was difficult

The number of responses shown, therefore, is given merely to illustrate the relative weights given to various behaviors and their causes by the two groups. This weighting provides us with a picture of how the different groups perceive the "specialness" of the VISTA Volunteer. Differing perceptions in a case like this may be more revealing than similarity of point of view.

Limitations

Let us start with the ways in which VISTA Volunteers are considered less effective vis-a-vis clients than other agency personnel. Table 30 outlines these differences.

As is to be expected, the job limitations stem from deficiencies in knowledge and experience due both to lack of professional training and the youthful immaturity of the Volunteers. Volunteers note their unfamiliarity with available community resources and their greater difficulty in obtaining help from other agencies for their clients.

It is interesting to note that Volunteers are more apt to comment on lack of skill than are their Supervisors; only 58% of the Supervisors noted lack of skill as compared with 70% of the Volunteers. On the other hand, Supervisors are more likely to point to the inability of the Volunteers to accept the agency, its goals, channels and procedures. (Not all Supervisors, however, see the lack of ties to the agency in the same light. Some see Volunteers' independence as an area of strength compared to other staff, rather than as a limitation.)

TABLE 30 -- Ways in Which VISTA Volunteers Are Less Effective in Behalf of Clients than Other Agency Staff

Areas in Which VISTA Volunteers Are Less Effective and Causation	Number of Responses	
	Volunteers	Supervisors
1- Job	(62)	(39)
Not as much skill due to lack of training and experience	54	26
Need longer training, adjustment period	--	3
Do not have authority to act on job in behalf of client; agency limitations	6	--
Let personal problems interfere with work	--	4
Need to see tangible results, otherwise frustration overwhelms	--	3
Assignment not permanent, people sense this, limited term of service	2	3
2- Agency and Community	(27)	(18)
Not as knowledgeable about community resources, other agencies, ways to work with other agencies	20	4
VISTAS do not respect agency or are impatient with rules, policies, channels, procedures	--	12
Don't know workings of agency, channels, procedures	2	--
Have limited influence in agency, can't get things done	--	2
Not accepted by in-group of professionals, no status, powerless	5	--
3- Personal Characteristics of Volunteer	(17)	(17)
Youthfulness, lack of maturity, lack of responsibility	5	14
Depends on ability of individual, level of maturity, stability	12	3

TABLE 30 -- Continued

Areas in Which VISTA Volunteers Are Less Effective and Causation	Number of Responses	
	Volunteers	Supervisors
4- Clients	(17)	(8)
Not easily accepted, are so different, don't speak same language, don't know customs	17	--
Have difficulty communicating with and relating to clients	--	2
Can't handle emotional or other problems of clients	--	2
VISTAS get overinvolved	--	4
Total number of people answering questions	111	75
Number of persons noting one or more limitations	80	45
Total number of comments	123	82

With respect to the question of Volunteer immaturity and lack of responsibility, as many Volunteers as Supervisors recognize the possibility of this being a limitation in the case of some Volunteers. Limitations with respect to clients, noted mainly by Volunteers, appear to arise from their deep desire to be accepted and able to "do a job."

Some Volunteers noted their position of powerlessness in the agency structure, while another group of Volunteers stressed difficulties of client and community acceptance due to differences in Volunteer race and background. These latter comments arose primarily in situations where white Volunteers worked in primarily Negro agencies, or where there were indigenous workers.

In summary we find that Volunteers and Supervisors both recognize limitations of training and skill, although Volunteers mention skill deficiencies more often than Supervisors. As newcomers to the neighborhood and agency, Volunteers sometimes feel like strangers and are not as able to make referrals and get help from other agencies. Supervisory comments, on the other hand, are more agency-oriented than the Volunteers' and cite the negative attitude of the Volunteers towards the agency (impatience with agency procedures, lack of respect for agency goals and programs). Both groups recognize that immaturity on the part of Volunteers can be a serious liability and undermine the possibility for effective work relationships with clients.

Areas of Special Effectiveness (see Table 31 on page 146.)

Volunteers are deeply involved in the neighborhoods and this is frequently uppermost in their minds when they compare themselves with other staff. It is therefore not surprising that living in the neighborhood was mentioned most frequently by Volunteers as generating some special effectiveness. Almost three-fourths of the Volunteers who cited a special quality of effectiveness on the part of the VISTA Volunteer credit "living in" as being the root cause. By being in the area all the time, Volunteers feel they can help more, devote more time and energy to their clients, know more about needs and be present "where the action is." This living with the poor is seen as the special badge of the VISTA by the Volunteers themselves, agency staff and clients, and it more than any other factor makes for success, according to the Volunteers. Although some Supervisors agree with the Volunteers on these points, they are more defensive about any ability to do a better job arising from the Volunteers' living with the clients. Particularly sensitive are professionals from minority groups or poverty backgrounds who have left the neighborhood. Most Supervisors think the Volunteers should live in the neighborhood (it closes the gap between the Volunteers' background and the culture of poverty and they can get closer to the clients), but it is definitely not accepted as the main reason why Volunteers are more effective than other staff.

To the Supervisors, two factors make for greater success in some cases: the VISTA Volunteers' personal mode of behavior and the quasi-volunteer status of the Volunteers. Because Volunteers are young and idealistic and have chosen to give one year of service, they have greater enthusiasm, dedication and investment than most other staff. They are not "work tired" or discouraged by the enormity of the problems of poverty. Cynicism has not set in. This the Supervisors and clients find very attractive. Some Volunteers recognize the special commitment of VISTAS, but many tend to take this for granted and do not allude to it as something special. One Volunteer said about commitment: "Volunteers feel they have a personal stake in the program over and above as a job. It is not merely a job; it involves them more personally."

Closely allied to this enthusiasm and idealism is the relatively free position of the Volunteers. They have few vested interests. They are not bound to job, career or agency, but can really work for the client. This total identification is denied a professional who must consider the broader picture. Too, Volunteers have more chance for direct contacts with clients; they are not burdened with administrative chores. It is almost as if the Volunteers represent that other free self so many professionals recall and yearn to be: the young, unfettered activist who can, like Robin Hood, be a champion of the poor against the Establishment. Obviously, this is a romantic picture, but to Supervisors, as to others who have worked with the young VISTA Volunteers, there is a romance in VISTA. Supervisors tacitly agree this unfettered romantic quality is no small part of the Volunteers' effectiveness.

There is one final aspect of the VISTA role that gives rise to a particular type of effectiveness in particular circumstances: the non-professional nature of the VISTA-client relationship. The Volunteers feel that their non-professional stature gives them a closeness to the clients and ability to help. Supervisors, as professionals, are less likely to recognize this area of special effectiveness, but some of the more honest and less threatened Supervisors agree with the Volunteers. One experienced social worker noted:

> VISTAS have something definite to contribute which is unique. They have a natural synthesis of their knowledge to begin with because this knowledge has not been through professional training where knowledge is broken down. In professional training, we tend to break down and analyze into compartments. Then the professional has to go into the field and through experience, put it all together again. At that point, of course, the professional is at a higher point, but it takes time. A VISTA instinctively synthesizes--as a result he has the ability to view problems as a whole--look for solutions in a total sense rather than specific. This endears him to the people--it makes them feel he understands their problems better.

In summary, the appraisal of the special effectiveness of VISTA Volunteers as well as their limitations depends on who you are and your role definition. Volunteers stress the special values of living with the clients as friends and neighbors and relating to them as peers rather than as professionals to dependents. Supervisors tend to reject these reasons and feel the Volunteers are especially effective vis-a-vis other staff because they are young and idealistic and because they are "free" to really fight for the client. In reality a combination of all these factors goes into making the successful VISTA Volunteer and explains why he can, without much training, establish relationships with clients that can make a dent in poverty.

TABLE 31 -- Ways in Which VISTA Volunteers Are More Effective Than Other Agency Staff

Behavior	Number of Respondents	
	Volunteers	Supervisors
Live in Neighborhood	(58)	(32)
Have closer relationships with clients, devote more time, more involved with clients and community--available where the action is.	50	12
Build closer relationships with clients.	--	14
Know more about the problems, needs of clients.	--	6
Prove to clients that VISTA Volunteers care by living with them.	8	--
Non-professional Nature of VISTA-client Relationship	(22)	(10)
Act as peers with client, not professionals, don't use jargon, not authoritarian or punitive, not encumbered by professional status, less threatening to client to turn to VISTA for help.	16	4
Willingness to do all kinds of things which many agency people cannot or will not do, i.e., wash floors, baby-sit, etc.	6	6
Quasi-Volunteer Status--Not Completely Enmeshed in Agency Structure	(15)	(49)
More objective with respect to needs of clients because have no vested interests, not protective of agency, establishment.	--	29
Clients sense VISTAS are relatively free from limitations of agency, bureaucracy.	--	8
One year commitment frees Volunteer from job interests, career line, not bound by pecking order.	15	2
Can devote more time directly to clients because either have smaller caseloads or no administrative functions.	--	10

TABLE 31-- Ways in Which VISTA Volunteers Are More Effective Than Other Agency Staff--Continued

Behavior	Number of Respondents Volunteers	 Supervisors
Mode of Behavior of Volunteers	(8)	(37)
More enthusiastic, committed, special zeal, not tired by long time on job.	8	17
Youthfulness makes it easier for them to relate to clients--particularly teenagers and children.	--	10
More flexible, willing to learn, not so bound by previous training or experience.	--	10
Number of persons answering questions.	111	75
Number of persons giving one or more reason why Volunteers are more effective.	83	46
Total number of comments.	103	128

CHAPTER V

After Agency Hours

Living in the Neighborhood

Introduction

Throughout the entire year of service, a majority of VISTA Volunteers live on the block or in the immediate neighborhood in which they work. VISTA Washington does everything possible to encourage this "living in." Thus, while not indigenous, the Volunteer soon becomes part of the neighborhood: he shops in the same stores as his clients, uses the same laundromat, stands around and chats with neighbors, and welcomes the teenagers into his apartment to listen to records or "shoot the bull." By his actions, both on and off the job, the better Volunteer attempts to show his willingness to give any kind of help and his genuine concern for his neighbors on the block.

In Bedford-Stuyvesant, one of New York's worst Negro ghettos, a young VISTA Volunteer working with the elderly describes the process this way:

> The living in the neighborhood makes all the difference. You're not just here to do an ordinary 9 to 5 job. When we first moved in we were highly visible; after all, white girls are unusual around here. But now after three months we're known. My street is like a small community. The underground is amazing; they can tell me where I was on Monday night. In the beginning everything you did was watched and you're either made or broken by the way you work with people, how reliable you are. But if you follow through they gradually accept you and start calling on you all the time.

> Last week it was windy; people on Decatur Street tie their clotheslines to the telephone poles in their yards. One pole got knocked down; I immediately got a call from an elderly lady: 'Miss _____, my wash's all over Decatur Street.' So I went and got it, knocked on all the back doors and told what had happened and could I come into their yards to get the laundry. I gathered it up and took it to the laundromat.
>
> Right now the people on the block really take care of me; when I fail to show up at the candy store where I buy my paper, the man is worried and they come looking for me. Next week one of the ladies I visit is having her annual party for all her friends and, of course, I am going.

It should be noted, however, that living on the block affects social distance in two ways. It not only brings clients closer to VISTA but, at the same time, acts to close the gap between the middle class background of the Volunteer and the culture of poverty. Without question the experience of living in urban poverty is temporarily upsetting for protected, middle class Volunteers, but our findings show that any culture shock that occurs is by no means overwhelming. The vast majority of Volunteers endorse the concept of living with the poor and indicate the experience is crucial to their own understanding of poverty and to their ability to successfully identify with and relate to their clients.

A Volunteer described the effect of living in a poverty neighborhood on a minimum VISTA budget on her own perceptions and understanding:

> I never knew what it was like to be hungry before. But now before our VISTA checks come in we often run out of money; we don't have much food except crackers and apricots. Six months ago, boy, would I have complained! But now I think about what the people next door have for supper, or do they have supper, and so I stop. I think that

> is what keeps me going when I get discouraged. Sometimes it is very discouraging, you know, when you live with roaches, the john gets plugged up, ceiling starts cracking. I say, 'Oh, you middle class softie, think what it is like to be a mother with five kids.' But if you don't go into homes and see them after work you wouldn't know this; their poverty stays with you much more and makes it possible for you to go on working. It wouldn't be this way if you just worked with them on a 9 to 5 basis and talked with them as professionals.

Living in the neighborhood takes considerable restraint and maturity on the part of the Volunteers since they are under constant scrutiny. In a few instances, Volunteers, acting immaturely, have ignored the social mores of the community and caused considerable difficulty for themselves as well as for their sponsors.

Where the Volunteers Live

Living among the people whom one serves is, of course, a reality only for VISTA Volunteers attached to agencies serving clearly defined neighborhood populations. Some urban VISTA Sponsors such as the Bail Bond Projects or the adult education division of a Board of Education draw clients from all parts of the city, so that the concept of neighborhood living is not germane. Fifteen Volunteers in our study (about 14%) work for such agencies.

Of the 96 Volunteers who worked in specific neighborhoods, 68% lived directly in the neighborhood among the people they served. The reasons the remaining 32% did not live in their work neighborhoods varied. In some cases, the agencies did not allow the Volunteers to to live in the neighborhoods because of fears for the Volunteers' safety.[1] Often it was very difficult to obtain apartments in the particular neighborhood in which the Volunteers worked. Sometimes they chose to share apartments with fellow VISTAS in other poverty areas. However, a majority of these Volunteers who did not live in the immediate vicinity of their agencies lived in other poverty or borderline areas. As a result, the number of Volunteers reporting contact with the poor after agency hours considerably exceeds the number actually living in the immediate vicinity of their work.

Type of Housing

Most of the VISTA Volunteers in our study lived in apartments. A few groups of Volunteers were able to rent houses, and an occasional Volunteer rented a room from a family. Since most of the apartments were in slum neighborhoods, they frequently consisted of a floor in a two or three story, dilapidated frame house. Occasionally, apartments in low-income housing projects were made available to the Volunteers. Usually, though not always, Volunteers lived with at least one other Volunteer, often from the same Columbia training cycle.

Almost half the Volunteers reported having some difficulty finding housing within their budgets in their immediate work neighborhood. Adequate housing in slum areas is at a premium in many larger "high-rent" cities and the Volunteers often found it hard to compete for the few available apartments. Although Sponsors were supposed to help Volunteers find housing, at least one-third of the VISTAS reported getting no assistance. Another third were simply steered to temporary housing in Y's, etc. Thus, the whole process of looking for housing in a strange urban slum was for many Volunteers a very difficult and almost traumatic experience. But they survived and as they trudged the streets, Volunteers received their first real taste of life in the neighborhood in which they would live and work during the coming year.

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[1] Although no Volunteer reported personal fear as a reason for not living among the poor, fear may have been a factor in a few cases, particularly among older Volunteers.

Condition of Volunteer Housing

The Volunteers were asked to compare the conditions of their places of residence and those of their clients. None reported that their living conditions were worse than their clients'; 40% said the conditions were about the same; 50% said their homes were slightly better. (Ten per cent did not answer.) Visits to Volunteer homes revealed that their ingenuity and effort, rather than the physical condition of the housing, accounted for most of the seemingly better conditions. Volunteers tried in a variety of ways to make the slum homes livable. Bright paint was liberally applied, pictures from magazines or inexpensive museum prints decorated the walls,and books, hi-fi sets, and/or musical instruments were in sight. Part of the VISTA hope was that the Volunteers would serve as role models for clients, and in the area of housing, this often was possible. Many Volunteers noted that their efforts to make things more attractive had been commented upon by clients, particularly young adults.

A notable example was a frame house in Baltimore occupied by a group of male Volunteers. With paint and inexpensive material, the Volunteers had transformed the house into a kind of showplace and center for the 18 to 25 year olds on the block. Neighbors were amazed at how the place appeared and constantly dropped by to look around, staying to listen to records and read magazines and books. True, there had been several robberies and locks had been placed on all windows and doors, but the Volunteers, undaunted, continued to keep "open house."

It is little wonder that this VISTA home had such a strong appeal for the neighborhood's young people who lived under the most deprived environmental conditions. But while the house was bright and clean inside, it was still a slum in the middle of one of the most decrepit, high crime areas in town. (A far cry from parental homes or college dorms.)

Should I Live Among the Poor?

Although living among the poor is a "given" of VISTA, is this really a sound idea? Volunteers and Supervisors were asked their opinions about this, and their responses are summarized in Table .

TABLE 32-- Should VISTA Volunteers Live in the Neighborhood in Which They Work?

	Volunteers		Supervisors	
	N	%	N	%
VISTAS should live in the neighborhood	79	71	43	57
It depends	21	19	8	11
VISTAS should not live in the neighborhood	11	10	18	24
No Answer	--	--	6	8

A majority of both Volunteers and Supervisors were in favor of the Volunteers living in the neighborhood. However, a larger percentage of Volunteers than Supervisors were in favor of it. And a larger percentage of Supervisors were definitely opposed (24% of the Supervisors opposed, and 10% Volunteers). Some Volunteers and Supervisors felt that living in the neighborhood depended on the type of agency to which the Volunteer was assigned. If the Volunteer was assigned to a project serving a particular neighborhood, it would be advantageous. If he was assigned to a project drawing clients from all over the city it was not seen as necessary.

Volunteer opinion about the advisability of living in the neighborhood appears to be related to actual experience. Of the 66 Volunteers who had actually lived in the neighborhood, 80% were in favor of the arrangement and only five per cent opposed. Of the 30 Volunteers who did not live in the neighborhood where they worked, more than half felt that Volunteers should live in the neighborhood, but 13% were opposed to the arrangement.

The Volunteers who worked for agencies without a particular neighborhood were most negative about living in the neighborhood; more than one-quarter were opposed (although two-thirds of this group of Volunteers also felt favorably toward living in the neighborhood). It would appear that the more experience the Volunteer has with living in the neighborhood, the more strongly he supports the concept. (see Table 33 on the following page.)

TABLE 33-- Volunteers' Opinions About Living in Neighborhood as Related to Place of Residence

Where Volunteer Lives	Should Live in		It Depends		Should Not Live in		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
In neighborhood	53	80	10	15	3	5	66
Not in neighborhood	16	54	10	33	4	13	30
D.N.A. (no particular neighborhood)	10	67	1	6	4	27	15

Advantages of Living in the Neighborhood

Both Volunteers and Supervisors offered many reasons for supporting the VISTA precept of living with the poor. However, Volunteers as a group tended to be more committed to the principle and offered some additional advantages over and above those set forth by Supervisors. (A total of 40 Supervisors responded with 42 reasons, while 80 Volunteers offered a total of 132 responses in defense of "living in.")

Table 34 summarizes the advantages of living with the poor noted by Volunteers and Supervisors.

Both Volunteers and Supervisors consider the primary advantage to be increased Volunteer understanding of the poor and their needs. Some Volunteers noted understanding of the poor and understanding of the community and power structure as separate items; Supervisors tended to lump these ideas together as being part and parcel of what the VISTA would gain from "living in."

TABLE 34 -- Reasons for Living in the Neighborhood

	Number of Persons Mentioning	
	Volunteers	Supervisors
Benefit to Volunteer		
Gives Volunteer greater understanding of poverty, the poor and their needs	48	26
Greater feeling, empathy, more knowledge of community, power structure	11	--
Benefit to Client		
Make contacts and work with clients easier, not looked on as professionals, are more effective, useful because seen as neighbors, clients feel closer to VISTAS	33	7
Presence in neighborhood provides greater opportunity to be where needed, where action is, clients can turn to Volunteers as needed	--	10
Living in the neighborhood proves to the poor the sincerity of VISTAS, the fact that they really care, clients will trust more	29	9
VISTA Volunteer can serve as role model	7	--
Miscellaneous, easier for VISTA, can bring programs out of agency, etc.	4	--

Volunteers consider extremely important the possibilities of close relationships with clients arising out of living in the neighborhood. They alluded to the fact that they were seen differently and that living with the poor wiped out boundaries that usually separate worker from client. Close relationships would, of course, result in greater service on the part of Volunteers, but more important according to the VISTAS was this special kind of client-Volunteer relationship that arose from living together in the neighborhood.

This approach was rarely expressed by Supervisors, who tended to restrict their comments on VISTA-client relationships to the question of greater availability to give service. Because the Volunteer is in the neighborhood, Supervisors feel, he is available as needed 24 hours per day and can therefore, offer more assistance. This tendency to stress quantity of service was in sharp contrast to the Volunteers' emphasis on quality of relationships.

Closely involved with the possibility for a special VISTA-client relationship was the Volunteers' feeling that living with the poor (mainly Negroes) proved their sincerity and that they really cared. In addition, a few Volunteers brought up still another reason for living in the neighborhood. They felt that they could serve as role models for the poor and could perhaps teach by their example ways to avoid the oppressiveness of poverty.

It is interesting to contrast the different emphases of the two groups on the advantages of living in the neighborhood. Volunteers were more likely to stress closeness of relationships and improved quality of service to clients resulting from living among the poor. Supervisors tended to reject such claims and emphasized quantity of service and the value to the middle-class Volunteer of seeing poverty first hand. (A value that the Volunteers also recognized as an important plus.)

Opposition to Living in the Neighborhood

More Supervisors were opposed to the Volunteers living in the neighborhood than Volunteers themselves. The primary reason the Supervisors gave for this opposition was the safety factor. They also felt that some of the excess pressure on the Volunteers would be removed if they could get out of the neighborhood at times. They felt that the Volunteers needed a breathing spell to gain perspective on the situation.

The small number of Volunteers objecting to the precept of living in the neighborhood did so for different reasons. In general, they felt that middle-class Volunteers could never become accepted by the poor and be completely trusted, particularly in Negro ghettos. Therefore, the whole concept was mechanical.

A few Volunteers were willing to say that they needed a relief from the pressure of the environment and the fears and depression. It is likely that this is the primary reason for any Volunteer's opposition to living directly in a poverty neighborhood, though only a handful of Volunteers had the courage to verbalize such fears.

As might be expected, few Supervisors interviewed lived in poverty areas themselves; this was true even for those who originally came from the neighborhoods in which they worked. As a group, they were somewhat defensive about any claims for increased relational fluency as a result of "living in." Many said that outsiders were not accepted anyway. It is not really surprising that the professional Supervisors, as a group, were less likely to justify living in the neighborhood on the grounds of increased ability to make meaningful relationships with clients. Over the years, in social welfare, there has been a tendency to ignore the precepts of Jane Addams regarding the importance of total neighborhood involvement with clients. With the emphasis on psychoanalytically oriented intervention, too-close involvement was seen as hindering rather than helping client progress. Fortunately, the Peace Corps and now VISTA have refocused attention on living directly with those served, and the resultant benefits in quality and quantity of service.

The Impact of Living in the Neighborhood

Degree to Which VISTA Volunteers are Known in the Neighborhood

Volunteers and Supervisors verbally endorse the positive effects of living in the neighborhood on the Volunteers' understanding and accomplishments. They contend that living with the poor brings closer contact between clients and Volunteers and allows the Volunteer to offer more service and to function more effectively as a link between the ghetto and the outside world.

However, for such benefits to occur, Volunteers must be known and accepted by the residents of the poverty communities in which they live. The design of our study did not provide for measurement of Volunteer acceptance directly through client interviews or protracted participant observation. But we were able to get some approximate measures of acceptance by talking with the Volunteers.

Acceptance of outsiders by a tightly knit poverty community takes time; four months is a mere beginning. In addition, the Volunteers were white and the ghettos Negro. The mitigating circumstances allowing any substantial integration to take place appear to be the constant presence of the Volunteer in the neighborhood, the reduction of social distance between them and their neighbors, and the Volunteers' youth, attractiveness and obvious desire to be of service.

To what extent did the Volunteers feel their neighbors were aware of their presence at the end of four months? There are several levels of awareness ranging from mere acknowledgement of presence by a nod or look, to a knowledge of the Volunteer's name, to a recognition of his particular VISTA role in the scheme of things, to the actual process of turning to the Volunteer in friendship and for assistance. Volunteers were asked a series of questions concerning these various levels of acceptance. The estimated proportion of neighbors who, according to the Volunteers, would nod acknowledgement, would know the Volunteer by name, and are aware of their VISTA identity is shown in the following table.

TABLE 35 -- Degree of Residents' Awareness of VISTAS' Presence

	Neighbors' Response		
Proportion of Neighbors	Would Nod and Say Hello %	Would know Volunteer by Name %	Are Aware He or She is a Volunteer %
Hardly anyone	09.0	12.7	36.0
Some	36.0	36.0	27.9
Quite a few or many	40.6	36.9	21.7
Does not apply; No answer*	14.4	14.4	14.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

*These Volunteers do not live in a neighborhood as such

Most Volunteers feel they are known by at least some of their neighbors. If they were to walk down the street on a sunny day, only nine per cent feel they would get no response from the people standing around. Approximately one-third would be acknowledged by some people while 40% feel that *many* people would nod or say hello. As is to be expected, given the short time the Volunteers have lived in the neighborhoods, fewer people know them by name and still fewer are aware of the Volunteers' VISTA identity. But, here again, almost two-thirds of the Volunteers feel that *some* people know them by name and one-third feel that *many* people know them by name. It appears that if the Volunteers' estimates are approximately accurate, more than 50% of the Volunteers achieved some integration into their neighborhoods by the end of the first four months.

Although there is, at the end of four months, still a sizeable number of Volunteers (36%) who feel that *hardly anyone* is aware that they are VISTA Volunteers, some VISTA recognition also appears to exist and there is every reason to believe that it will increase with time. Twenty-eight per cent of the Volunteers feel that at least *some* of their neighbors are aware of their VISTA identity, while 21% feel that *quite a few* people know them as VISTA Volunteers. It is important to note, however, that proportionately more Volunteers report that neighborhood people know them by name, than are aware of their VISTA identity. Some VISTAS undoubtedly begin to establish themselves and become known as friends and neighbors without any formal recognition of their VISTA association. It is quite likely that the phrase "VISTA Volunteer" does not yet have wide meaning in the urban ghettos, and that even where Volunteers identify themselves as VISTAS, the concept is not readily assimilated by their neighbors.

The most rigorous measure of Volunteer acceptance is whether neighbors turn to VISTAS for friendship and/or assistance in time or need. As a final index of integration in the community four months after arrival, the Volunteers were asked: "Since you have been a VISTA Volunteer, has anyone (client or not) come to you for help after working hours?" Two-thirds of the Volunteers answered affirmatively; only 31% reported that no one came to them for help after work. (This 31% includes 15 Volunteers who do not work for neighborhood-based agencies.)

The Effect of Living in the Neighborhood on VISTA Service

It is impossible, of course, to measure statistically the amount and quality of additional service offered by the Volunteers as a result of their living in the neighborhood. There appears to be evidence that even in the first few months, neighbors turned for help to a majority of Volunteers in our sample. In many cases, the help offered was not agency connected; in other circumstances, it involved deepening and extending agency services.

The Volunteers report that a variety of people came for help in a variety of ways. Some were clients known through the agency, others were neighbors in the building in which a Volunteer lived, or teenagers from the recreation program with school problems. People started conversations in the local stores or laundromats. Requests for help occurred spontaneously because Volunteers were around.

> One day, a mother with children in the local school stopped a Volunteer on the street to talk about her children. In the course of conversation, the Volunteer was invited upstairs to the house. There, conversation moved to larger health and family problems, and the Volunteer was asked for help. As a result of this informal talk, an aged grandmother got to a hospital and a baby got its first checkup since birth.

Or again, and so typical:

> A group of Volunteers struck up a conversation with some teenage boys who complained about lack of space to play ball. In time, the Volunteers involved the teenagers in cleaning up a large vacant lot and transforming it into a softball field and playground. The result: organized recreation on the block.

Because of their willingness to get involved in all kinds of problems and to extend their day beyond five o'clock, Volunteers often were able to expand relationships with agency clients. One Volunteer noted:

> One day, a girl came into Bluebirds with a very poor report card, terribly upset and scared to go home. After the meeting, we walked down the street together and I went home with her and talked to her mother. I offered to help her at night. Now I tutor her on a number of subjects and visit her in her home frequently. We have become good friends and I have been of help in some serious behavior problems. She's smart and beginning to do well.

There were many examples of non-agency-connected service offered by the study Volunteers in the neighborhoods in which they live. Some Volunteers set up informal tutoring programs in their own homes, others became leaders of neighborhood Boy or Girl Scout troops, still others worked with local Youth Councils as advisors. Volunteers spent time informally playing with the kids on the block; some took them on trips outside the ghetto. Others organized Christmas carol sings or parties for Thanksgiving.

Volunteers are proud in describing their activities in a voter registration drive, or organizing a senior citizens' club, or becoming involved in a tenant organization and going downtown with a group of neighbors to complain about lack of police protection. One girl helped organize a group of mothers on her block to fight for better welfare facilities. Many of the Volunteers who are involved in direct-service projects in their agencies turn after hours to community organization in the neighborhoods in which they live.

In enumerating the many services offered in the neighborhoods by the Volunteers in our study, one must not overlook the hours spent in informal socializing with neighbors on the block. Over and over, Volunteers note that they spent their free time just talking, standing around, or visiting their neighbors. In one sense, this may seem to be a vague, undefined use of time. But in reality, it is another indication of integration into the community and the way acceptance develops. VISTA Volunteers are not "expert outsiders" visiting a family to talk about a specific problem (e.g., truancy, welfare check, health visits). On the contrary, if they are effective at all, it is as neighbors in an extended family sense. Socializing is the bedrock of this neighborly process and offers the eventual possibility of genuine service. Many of the Volunteers in our study feel that their greatest contribution to their Negro neighbors is as concerned white friends.

The Effect of Poverty on the Volunteers

Up to now, we have been concerned with the impact of the VISTA Volunteers on their respective poverty neighborhoods. But what of the impact of overwhelming poverty on middle-class Volunteers? What is the initial reaction of the Volunteers to the ghetto and how does time affect their feelings?

Fear and Frustration

Fear stalks the ghetto for resident and outsider alike. The Volunteers were asked about their initial reactions to the neighborhood in which they live and/or work and any change in their feelings after being in the area for approximately four months.

When they first arrived, 52% of the Volunteers were afraid to walk around alone in the neighborhood; 35% said they had no fear and 13% did not answer the question. (Most of these 13% worked for agencies without a specific neighborhood.) Overwhelmingly, the fear was associated only with the night and did not include fear of the daytime in the ghettos. Possibly daytime fear might have been higher except for the exposure in New York City slums received during training. However, at Columbia, Volunteers were warned not to walk around alone at night and Agency Supervisors generally gave Volunteers a similar warning on arrival.

Of the 58 people who indicated they had a fear of walking alone when they first arrived, slightly more than half had the same fear after four months; most of the remainder had less fear. Apparently familiarity with the neighborhood reduced,to some extent, the original fear, but the reality of danger at night made elimination of all fear impossible. One wonders whether fear is not something Volunteers need for their own protection as long as it is not dysfunctional. Volunteers suggest that the subject of fear be discussed openly during training and utilized for the purpose of insuring Volunteer safety.

But fear is not the only emotion involved in adjusting to poverty. Frustration, apathy and the overwhelming nature of the problems also have their impact on Volunteers, particularly in the early days.

One Volunteer summed up the feelings of many in an answer to the question "Are there some things about working with the poor and the life conditions you see all around that you find upsetting or very difficult?"

> Oh well, yes. The most disturbing thing by far is the feeling that youth is being lost--that the youngsters are moving into the same cycle as the older people: meaningless wandering about the neighborhood, drinking, nothing to do. The schools are so inadequate, and there is such a shortage of social workers. I have seen, since I've been here, examples of kids who I know could have been saved from the police had I been here earlier. (This Volunteer was working in a Neighborhood Service Center with heavy emphasis on youth.)
>
> Some of the housing conditions have been so disturbing. The rat situation is so bad--rats run riot--you can't poison them without poisoning the whole neighborhood. There are six or seven in a kitchen. The residents have learned just to let the rats have their place. I'm also very uncomfortable in the roach situation. At first I didn't know what to do--ignore them, kill them--they're somewhat less disturbing now. As far as this community is concerned, the whole sort of disbelief, futility, hopelessness about the future disturbed me terribly.

Still another Volunteer noted the heartbreak:

> When I'm up at the Detention Center and see the kicking around people get, it disturbs me. To see people that are incapable of even living, of taking care of themselves,is almost too much.

Pressures on the Volunteers

The pressures on the VISTA Volunteer in urban poverty are many. The Volunteer is placed in the midst of an environment with which he has no connection either emotionally or culturally. He meets problems for which others more experienced and highly trained have few solutions. He moves into a neighborhood and comes into contact with people generally unlike any he has experienced previously. And he has no family or established ties to support him.

He is given his first adult job and expected to perform within an agency and structure he only vaguely understands. Because he is so highly motivated to do a job, he wants desperately to be of help to people with whom he is just beginning to make contact. And the national organization of which he is a part often seems very remote. It is not surprising that most Volunteers agree with the young VISTA who said:

> It just seems as if frustrations keep piling up--job frustrations, housing frustrations, coupled with such an awful feeling of self-doubt about what I can accomplish. Sometimes I get so depressed I feel as if I have to get away from it all just to breathe again.

During the first four months, 14% of the Volunteers in our study often felt as if they had to get away; 56% occasionally felt the need to get away, while only 30% said they rarely, if ever, experienced a need to escape.[1]

However as some Volunteers began to have roots in the neighborhood, make friends with other VISTAS and neighbors and started to experience satisfaction on the job, the need to "get away" diminished. At the end of four months in the field about one-third of the Volunteers reported less need to get away. But for 43% of the Volunteers there was no appreciable lessening of pressure, while 20% actually felt more acutely the need to occasionally escape.

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[1] This figure of 30% seems high and it is possible that some Volunteers found it hard to admit the pressure to "get away."

It would appear that while adjustments take place, there is continuing pressure on many Volunteers. The impact of poverty has a cumulative effect. The need for release of pressure and reinforcements from outside sources is an ever present "given" for most of the Volunteers in our urban sample.

How Do Volunteers Handle the Pressure

As is to be expected, when pressure mounts, Volunteers turn mainly to each other and to their own inner resources for help. They may do several things:

Some just work harder:

> "Have a meeting, get something done. The more stuff you have to do the less bad you feel."

Others retreat into themselves:

> "Just work it out myself. Go home and read and mull it over."

A few take an occasional weekend away or a bottle of beer or just leave the neighborhood.

Some talk to their supervisors:

> "I'm lucky I can also talk to my supervisor, which is a good feeling."

But the largest number of VISTAS turn to each other, to roommates and/or other Volunteers:

> "I talk to my roommates. There is much to be said for compatible roommates. The only trouble is when we are depressed at the same time and feed on each other....

> "If only there are VISTAS you can talk to openly who understand what you're going through. Even if you don't get answers it helps to clarify your ideas and reach your own conclusions."

The VISTA Community

Given the pressures and frustrations, and the newness of VISTA life, it is not surprising that Volunteers are very much involved with each other. In every major city in which Volunteers work, an informal VISTA Community has sprung up. We would expect the Volunteers, in any case, to be attracted to each other because of similarity of age, education and socio-economic background. But the additional and crucial factor that binds them together is the common VISTA experience they share.

Volunteers are generally placed in a city with at least a few others with whom they trained and they often find apartments together. There is an active grapevine among Volunteers coast to coast. When new Volunteers arrive there are usually other Volunteers already working in the city. And the new arrivals are invariably welcomed by the "older" Volunteers, filled in on the city, the available apartments, where to go for inexpensive recreation, generally what's going on. In turn these newcomers welcome the next group of Volunteers.

VISTAS keep in close contact with those with whom they trained. Among the Volunteers in our study mail is heavy and leaves are frequently spent together. The sharpness of the VISTA experience solidifies an "in group"feeling and Volunteers report that family and friends often seem distant and a bit unreal at times.

In some cities, the informal VISTA community has crystallized into a formal association. These organizations were set up to disperse information about sources of help around the city for clients, to welcome new Volunteers, to organize projects in which Volunteers can work after agency hours (i.e., tutoring, taking children on trips), and to stand behind Volunteers having difficulties with their Agencies or with VISTA Washington.

Almost two-thirds of the Volunteers in our sample report a VISTA community--formal or informal--in their city. The Volunteers saw the community as a source of emotional support. They described it as providing a feeling of belonging, of having someone with them who is going through the same experience, as providing friends.

The VISTA community was also seen as a source of useful information about work being done in agencies around the city. This frequent communication among Volunteers enables them to learn what others are doing and to plan projects together. The contact with other VISTAS also provides a social and intellectual outlet.

The large majority of Volunteers saw the community as a positive factor in their adjustment. Only a small proportion felt they were excessively dependent upon it as a source of support. According to the Volunteers the very positive relationship which many had with their supervisors and their own inner resources contributed strongly to their positive adjustment.

A small percentage of the Volunteers, however, described the VISTA community as a negative factor. They felt that excessive contact among Volunteers led to cliques and a separation from the neighborhood of which they were supposed to be a part. These Volunteers also felt that a constant exchange of gripes among Volunteers could lead to a depressing and self-defeating situation.

Free Time Activities

Most VISTA Volunteers in our study work only 40 plus hours on agency-connected jobs. They were far from home and had minimal family responsibilities. Volunteers, therefore, had considerable free time. What use did they make of it?

The Volunteers were given a list of free time activities and asked to indicate those in which they were involved during the past two months. The activities and responses can be seen in Table .

The most popular form of relaxation, participated in by most Volunteers, was attending movies, concerts and theaters. Parties and informal visits with other VISTAS took up considerable time for at least 80% of the Volunteers. As noted previously, the VISTA life and the personal life of many Volunteers tended to merge. About 75% of the Volunteers spent some free time informally visiting or just standing around talking with people in the neighborhood. At least 60% attended neighborhood meetings and visited with other agency staff.

Volunteers were not too active in local political movements; only 6% reported such activity. The organization of new groups in the neighborhood (not agency-connected) and participation in protest movements (peace, civil rights) was a little more popular with the Volunteers. Slightly more than one-quarter spent some free time in such activities.

TABLE 36 -- Free Time Activities of VISTA Volunteers (N = 111)

Activity in Free Time	Percent of Volunteers reporting being engaged in activity*
Self recreation:	
Going to concerts, movies, theater	92.8
Social activities:	
Going to parties	83.9
Visiting other VISTAS	81.1
Involvement with people of neighborhood and agency:	
Standing around and talking to people in neighborhood	79.3
Visiting neighbors	67.6
Visiting with staff members from agency	64.0
Attending meetings in neighborhood	59.4
Organizing, activating, protesting:	
Organize group in neighborhood-- not agency connected	29.7
Social action participation--protest movements (anti-war, civil rights)	27.9
Political Activity:	
Working in local political organizations	6.3

*Adds up to more than 100% since many Volunteers participate in more than one activity.

From the Volunteers' descriptions of their free time activities a few conclusions can be noted. There is a high involvement of VISTA Volunteers in the community; two-thirds or more talk informally with, or visit, neighbors during their free time; 60% have attended neighborhood meetings (primarily non-agency-connected). Such activities are consistent with the living in pattern described previously and the deep involvement of the Volunteers with neighbors and clients.

Participation in political activities and even protest movements is not widespread. It appears that the extra energy of most of the Volunteers, while in VISTA, tends to be channeled toward involvement with neighbors in community-based activity.

The personal and social patterns of the Volunteers resemble other young people of their educational background. Cultural activities have a strong pull and there is a great need to socialize with other young people of their own age. However, it is indicative of their high personal involvement in their VISTA role that they find time to spend considerable free time in client-oriented activities.

When the Volunteers were asked with whom they spend their free time, the most popular choice was, of course, other VISTAS. Next in preference were people connected with their VISTA assignments--neighbors, clients, and other agency people. The proportion who spend their free time alone, or with friends they had before VISTA, is, of course, negligible. (see Table 37 on following page.)

TABLE 37-- Persons with Whom Volunteers Spend Free Time

Individual	Per cent
Other Volunteers	70.3
Neighbors, clients	46.9
Agency personnel	32.4
Alone	31.5
Friends had before VISTA	23.4

The relatively high involvement with other VISTAS did not prevent almost half the Volunteers from forming free time associations with neighbors. Another third also spent time with friends from the agency.

Not all VISTAS are gregarious; some preferred to spend at least some free time alone. The very small contact with friends from before is, of course, indicative of the cut-off nature of the VISTA experience. It would appear that a critical factor driving Volunteers into intense relationships with each other and with clients and neighbors is this planned isolation from the past. If young middle class people are to be able to successfully establish relationships in an alien culture, it may be that contact with the past must be kept at a minimum. This does not mean, however, a complete severance of past relationships, but rather a temporary re-alignment during which new and different experiences take place.

PART II

EVALUATION

CHAPTER VI

VISTA Volunteers Evaluate Their Jobs

Introduction

The foregoing sections of this report tell of the first four months of 111 VISTA Volunteers trained at Columbia during the year 1965-1966 and sent to serve in urban poverty. A four-month interval was chosen as an effective point at which to evaluate training; it is also an excellent vantage point from which to appraise the entire VISTA experience of the 111 Volunteers. In time, it represents about one-third to one-half of the average period of service of the group[1] and allows for the initial adjustment to VISTA and the agency. We have seen that by the time of the four-month interview, VISTA jobs were well-defined and few changes in assignment were projected for the remaining months of VISTA service. As a result, the beginning of the fifth month is a period of relative stability.

Before presenting the Volunteers' and Supervisors' evaluation of job performance, training at Columbia and reactions to the total VISTA experience to date, it would be helpful to learn what Volunteers and Supervisors think are the principal dimensions of the VISTA role. These role conceptions function as criteria in making evaluative assessments.

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[1] For the first Volunteers, the 12 month period of service included six weeks of training; subsequently the 12 months commenced at the end of training.

The Main Function of VISTA Volunteers

When a Volunteers sends an application to VISTA Washington he knows that he wants to give one year of service to the poor. He may further know that he prefers to serve urban poor rather than Indians, migrants or mental patients. But what does VISTA service mean to him? What is the special role of the VISTA Volunteer in the effort to overcome poverty? VISTA recruitment literature is by nature vague: "The VISTA Volunteer is the link between his nation and the potentially useful citizens who, without help, will be a loss to society and to himself....VISTA Volunteers are able to break down the barriers that separate deprived Americans from a full and abundant life....It is the citizens' army of the nation's War on Poverty...."

Hopefully by the end of training further clarification of the VISTA role takes place. But evidence indicates that different training centers with different orientations tend to give different messages about the nature of the VISTA role. Probably the most important difference is the degree of emphasis given to service versus organization for social action (the relative value accorded the social competence versus the social power model). This emphasis can come verbally in lectures and discussions and from the type of fieldwork experience afforded the Volunteer during training (i.e., involvement in organizing tenants of SRO's versus manning a recreation room in a settlement house). Another area of differing interpretation is the role of the social agency in the helping process and the nature of the relationship of the VISTA Volunteer to the agency.

At Columbia the staff saw itself primarily as training Volunteers for community action programs. However, in later cycles as the realities of the VISTA job picture became more clear, there was some attempt to balance the twin functions of social competence and social power and to help trainees see that both are involved in alleviating poverty. Throughout, the staff took a strong position on the positive role of the social agency as a purveyor of needed assistance. Volunteers were clearly informed that they would be attached to a Sponsor and that they would be expected to function as a part of this agency with all the resultant privileges and obligations. Because the nature of their permanent assignments was not known in training, trainees were usually exposed to social agency programs geared heavily to community action, but that also had a direct service component.

How well did this training message take? What do VISTA Volunteers who have worked for four months in urban poverty see as the main function of VISTA? What do they consider to be the relative importance of service versus organization to change the power structure? Is their evaluation radically different from that of their Supervisors' or is there general consensus about the role of VISTA Volunteers?

The answer to these questions is not only interesting in and of itself, but goes to the heart of the possibilities for VISTA Volunteer satisfaction and effective performance on the job. It should be remembered that our data indicate that most of the urban Volunteers in our sample spent the greater part of their time giving service (i.e., teaching, counseling, intervening with welfare investigators, running youth groups, manning Service Centers, etc.). Not more than one-quarter could be said to be directly involved in community action through their VISTA jobs. (Others were involved on their own after agency hours.)

To get a picture of how the VISTA role is conceptualized by both Volunteers and Supervisors deeply involved in poverty efforts, the following question was asked of both groups: Which of the following activities do you see as part of the VISTA job? Which are of major importance? Which are of minor importance and which of no importance?

Table 38 lists the activities presented to the respondents in the order of presentation and their responses.

TABLE 38 -- Relative Importance of Various Aspects of VISTA Role As Perceived by Volunteers and Supervisors

Items	Percent of Respondents Considering Importance								Rank Order of Importance
	Major		Minor		No Importance		No Answer		
	Vol.[1]	Supvr.[2]	Vol.	Supvr.	Vol.	Supvr.	Vol.	Supvr.	
1. Increasing the VISTAS' own knowledge about the poor and their problems.	89.2	82.7	8.1	14.7	0.9	1.3	1.8	1.3	2
2. Bringing specific services to the poor.	82.9	81.3	15.3	14.7	0.9	1.3	0.9	2.7	3
3. Improving the techniques and services of the agency for which the VISTA works	64.0	49.4	30.6	41.3	5.4	8.0	--	1.3	6
4. Informing the neighborhood about what the agency is trying to do.	72.1	72.0	23.4	21.3	4.5	4.0	--	2.7	4
5. Activating the poor to take advantage of existing services.	91.0	84.0	9.0	10.7	--	1.3	--	4.0	1
6. Organizing the poor to change the power structure.	68.5	52.0	25.2	20.0	5.4	17.3	0.9	10.7	5
7. Improving the morals of the poor.	13.5	16.0	33.3	22.7	51.4	49.3	1.8	12.0	8
8. Letting the people know there is such a thing as VISTA.	20.7	37.3	56.8	49.3	22.5	10.7	--	2.7	7

[1] N = 111

[2] N = 75

Functions in Order of Importance

To both Supervisors and Volunteers alike, the bridging function of "activating the poor to take advantage of existing services" (Item 5) is seen as the most important aspect of the VISTA role. Informing the neighborhood about existing agency services (Item 4) is also important, but most vital is the direct involvement of the Volunteers with the poor, either formally or informally, to assist them to become connected with existing services. Implicit is the recognition that something besides the traditional offer of services may be needed in order to reach the hard-core poor.

Because the Volunteers live in the neighborhood and are strongly identified with the clients, they are seen by Supervisors as a natural bridge. For the Volunteer, not highly trained in specific helping roles, this bridging role is particularly meaningful. Although only 26 Volunteers had job assignments that could be classified as bridging jobs as such (composed primarily of going out into the neighborhood to connect people and agency), the role of many Volunteers in teaching, counseling and organizing situations embodies a reaching out function. In addition, it should be noted that the Volunteers, as they live and are known in a neighborhood, serve naturally as a source of communication and referral. Thus the activation of the poor to take advantage of existing services is played out by VISTA Volunteers in many different ways.

Following closely behind "bridging" are two other functions considered of major importance: "increasing the VISTA Volunteers' knowledge about the poor" (Item 1) and "bringing direct service to the poor" (Item 2).

It is interesting to note the high rank (second in place) accorded self-development of the Volunteer. Although VISTA is publicized as a service to the poor, the participants also recognize another important aspect--the growth and development of the middle class Volunteers as a potential force for progress in this country.

As noted, the Volunteers are mainly young and groping for identity and self-actualization in the adult world. Without question, a part of their VISTA motivation is a personal thirst for knowledge about society and its problems; VISTA enables them to learn about urban poverty first-hand. At the same time the more they know about the poor, the more they can be of help. Thus, the learning experience is seen as crucial for both inner and outer-directed reasons. Supervisors also recognize the importance of this aspect of the VISTA role definition.

The third function considered of great importance by both Volunteers and Supervisors is the service function: "bringing specific services to the poor." Over 80% of both groups consider this to be one of the three crucial aspects of the VISTA role. The importance ascribed to this function by the Supervisors is of course understandable. They are representatives of social agencies heavily involved in direct service. It is possible that the high rank accorded the service function by the Volunteers is partly a reflection of their own experience in VISTA as service agents. It should be noted that 74% of the Volunteers have some direct service function on their jobs.

The catalyst role of "organizing the poor to change the power structure" (Item 6) is considered of somewhat less importance by both

Volunteers and Supervisors. It is accorded fifth place among the eight items. Only two-thirds of the Volunteers think organizing the poor is of major importance in the VISTA job (as contrasted with 80% or more in the case of the bridging or service function) while another one-quarter feel it is of minor importance. The Supervisors are even less inclined to highly value the organizing role. Slightly over half (52%) think it is of major importance, another 20% consider it of minor importance, and 18% say it is of no importance as a VISTA function.

Considering that organizing the poor for community action is a major tenet of the War on Poverty, the reaction of both the Supervisors and the Volunteers is somewhat surprising. It is possible that the reference to changing the power structure in the wording of the item was threatening to some Volunteers and Supervisors, but this alone should not account for the considerably reduced importance accorded the catalyst role. It may well be that although VISTA attracts a substantial proportion of activist young people, it also attracts a large number of essentially middle-of-the-road Volunteers who are more comfortable with service-oriented social welfare. Although they verbally espouse action in training, they may be less enthusiastic when faced with the realities of the power struggle in a ghetto community. Supervisors report that many Volunteers who talk about going out into the community as outreach workers have little concept of what is involved. When given the chance, some are quite lost and are happy to return to more secure, well-defined service jobs giving a concrete sense of accomplishment. (One of the most important aspects of future research will be to ascertain whether Volunteers on service jobs are in fact happier and perform better than those involved in community action.)

It is important to note, however, that the per cent of Volunteers (69%) considering social action of major importance is more than double the per cent who are actually involved in community organizing on their jobs. This means that a sizeable group of Volunteers who feel the social-action component is crucial have no opportunity to play out this aspect of the VISTA role on their jobs.

The role of the VISTA as innovator and gadfly (Item 2) is seen as of major importance by approximately 60% of the Volunteers and 50% of the Supervisors. The remaining respondents, in general, consider it of minor importance; very few dismiss it as of no importance. There is considerable recognition of the part VISTA Volunteers can play in bringing new ideas and methods of work to agencies, but the rank importance of this agency-oriented function is naturally lower than client-oriented aspects of the VISTA role.

"Letting people know there is such a thing as VISTA" (Item 8) is seen as having greater importance by Supervisors than by Volunteers, but both groups relegate this to a minor place in the role definition of the VISTA Volunteer.

"Improving the morals of the poor" (Item 7) appears to be almost generally rejected as part of the VISTA role.

In summary, both Volunteers and Supervisors agree that the three most important aspects of the VISTA Volunteer role are:

....activating the poor to take advantage of existing services, including informing the neighborhood about the agencies' programs. (the bridge function.)

....increasing the VISTAS' own knowledge about the poor and their problems.

....bringing specific services to the poor. (the service function.)

Volunteers consider the catalyst function (organizing the poor to change the power structure) next in importance, while Supervisors tend to consider improving the techniques and services of the agency for which the VISTAS work more important than organizing for social action. These latter functions are considered significantly less important than the three functions enumerated above, although sizeable groups of both Volunteers and Supervisors recognize them as definitely within the framework of the VISTA role.

In comparing the attitudes of the Volunteers by class with respect to the importance of various aspects of the VISTA role, we find that with two exceptions,[1] rank order of the principal components remains approximately the same for all cycles.

The Volunteers Evaluate Their Jobs

The Adjustment Period

The VISTA Volunteers in our sample were visited after they were on the job for four months. In general, they appeared to be relatively well satisfied with their work assignments and their Supervisors. However, in talking to them it was apparent that in many cases this relative stability was of recent origin.

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[1] Columbia III and VI rank increasing VISTAS' own knowledge first rather than second, and Columbia IV puts improving techniques and services of agency before community organization. See Appendix VI for table showing responses of Volunteers by training cycle.

Many Volunteers had gone through difficult adjustment periods during the first few months. For some, their assigned jobs did not live up to their expectations of a VISTA job: "it was not a community organization job" or "it did not involve direct contact with the poor in their homes." For others, the formality and bureaucracy of the agency were difficult; demands as to dress, residence, and the image they must portray as representatives of the agency took time to be assimilated.

Some agencies were not ready for the Volunteers; jobs had not been thought out; Supervisors had not been alerted. Other agencies thought they were getting more highly skilled Volunteers (in line with the Peace Corps' model of specialization) and were unprepared for the youth and relative immaturity of the Volunteers assigned. The Columbia III and IV Volunteers were often the first VISTAS to reach a sponsoring agency and for them particularly, the adjustment period was long.

Considering the variety of necessary adjustments, it may seem somewhat remarkable to find both Volunteers and agencies so settled by the four-month field visits. But behind the four-month satisfaction went weeks of learning, groping and gradual adjustment on the part of Volunteers, agency staff and VISTA Washington. As VISTA gets older, this "shakedown" period probably will grow shorter, but it appears unlikely that it can ever be eliminated completely. Both agencies and Volunteers should be made aware of this natural adjustment period and should be prepared for it ahead of time.

Satisfaction at the End of Four Months

By the end of four months on the job, 46% of the Volunteers were very satisfied with the work they had been given, while another 33% were fairly satisfied. However, 20% of the Volunteers expressed at least some dissatisfaction with the work given them, although only 3% of the Volunteers were very dissatisfied.[1]

Opportunity to Use Individual Abilities and Skills

The reason for the general job satisfaction expressed by most of the Volunteers can be understood when we look at the Volunteers' responses to a series of questions dealing with some of the specifics that go into job satisfaction.

For example, the opportunity to utilize one's abilities and skills is an important contributing factor to a feeling of well-being on the job. The VISTA Volunteers were asked to indicate on a seven-point scale the extent to which their VISTA jobs allowed them to utilize their abilities and skills. The scale and the percentage of Volunteers choosing each point is shown on the following page.

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[1] Although it is possible that a few Volunteers failed to express their dissatisfaction, it should be remembered that the research staff was seen as an extension of the Columbia training process rather than as researchers from VISTA Washington. Since most Volunteers had warm and trusting relationships with the Columbia staff, they talked openly and freely to the researchers. In all cases in which there was a serious problem between the Volunteer and agency, both parties aired opinions on the controversy to the interviewer.

1.8%	2.7%	9.9%	18.0%	28.8%	19.8%	18.9%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very limited extent			Some extent			Considerable extent

Well over 80% of the Volunteers felt that their abilities and skills were used on the job at least to some extent, while almost 20% said their abilities were used to a considerable extent. The mean rating for the group is 5.1. Again, however, it should be noted that there was a negative group of Volunteers (15%) who were frustrated with respect to opportunities to utilize their own skills and abilities.

Other Job Satisfactions

Further insight into the factors that helped produce the high level of Volunteer satisfaction with job assignment can be seen in the responses to a ten-statement true-false battery dealing with a variety of job dimensions.

The statements presented to the Volunteers and the Volunteers' responses are shown in the table on the following page.

Most Volunteers felt that their assignments were meaningful (real jobs that needed doing) and the majority of the people with whom they worked were poor and in need of their help. The tasks were considered to be non-routine but to a lesser extent constantly new and varied.[1] There was sufficient opportunity for the Volunteers to try things on their own.

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[1] In the case of the item "things keep changing around here and there is always something new and different to try," the positive responses only totaled 55% while 39% of the Volunteers did not agree to this statement. In most other items, positive responses were in the 75-80% range.

TABLE 39 -- Volunteer Reaction to Job Assignments

Statements About Job	Per cent of Volunteers Responding		
	True	False	N.A.
Personal Satisfaction			
1. I am given sufficient opportunity to do things on my own.	91.0	6.3	2.7
2. In general I get a sense of personal satisfaction out of what I am doing.	83.8	11.7	4.5
3. The job is really frustrating and not too rewarding.	19.8	73.9	6.3
4. Things keep changing around here and there is always something new and different to try.	55.0	39.6	5.4
Value of Work and Relationship to Poor			
5. The assignments have generally been meaningful, real jobs that needed doing.	87.4	9.0	3.6
6. Too often it seems as if my supervisor is just looking for something for me to do.	12.6	82.9	4.5
7. Too much of my work is routine and repetitive.	18.0	77.5	4.5
8. Most of the people I work with are not really poor.	19.8	76.6	3.6
Duplication			
9. Frequently I find myself duplicating work done by others on the staff.	13.5	82.0	4.5
10. If I didn't do the work assigned to me it might not get done.	81.1	14.4	4.5

They received a sense of personal satisfaction from their jobs. By and large, their assignments were seen as not duplicating the work of other staff and would probably not get done except for the presence of the VISTA Volunteers. It is easy to understand why such positive assessments of their job by 75-80% of the Volunteers were translated into relatively high ratings of job satisfaction.

It is interesting to note that the highest positive rating (91% of the Volunteers agreeing) was accorded the item: "I am given sufficient opportunity to do things on my own." Although a sense of independence is very important to most young people in the VISTAS' age bracket, it would be wrong to equate this with a desire for unlimited freedom, i.e., no structure or guidance. When the positive rating of 91% is related to Volunteer ratings on a seven-point scale describing "how much opportunity your supervisor gives you to do things on your own," we get a clearer picture of what freedom means to most VISTA Volunteers. The distribution of per cent ratings on the seven-point scale is as follows:[1]

1%	1%	1%	14%	16%	28%	38%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No Opportunity			Some Opportunity			Unlimited Opportunity

We find that although 91% of the Volunteers said they were given sufficient opportunity to initiate action, only 38% said their supervisors gave them unlimited opportunity to do things on their own (point 7 on the scale), while 58% equated sufficient opportunity with some but not unlimited freedom (points 4 to 6). Some structure clearly appears to be called for. If anything, our findings indicate that there is a desire on the part of most Volunteers for closer and more supportive, rather than laissez-faire, supervision. As noted, the Supervisors in our sample apparently found the proper balance and most Volunteers appeared to be satisfied with the amount of guidance and freedom they received. But for many, this satisfaction meant touching base with a Supervisor as often as once per day and help not only in defining what job was to be done, but in deciding, as well, how to carry out the specific tasks.

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[1] 1% did not answer the question.

In studying the answers to questions concerning job satisfaction we find that 80% or more of the Volunteers respond positively to most statements. However, there is a small but definite group of Volunteers (ranging from 9% to 20% depending on the statement), who feel negatively about their assignments. A closer study of these responses in the future should provide a better understanding of the job factors associated with satisfaction and dissatisfaction among VISTA Volunteers. In the absence of more definitive cross-tabulations, there are a few observations worth noting.

The VISTA Volunteers, by and large, were satisfied with their jobs. Associated with this satisfaction was the opportunity for Volunteers to use their skills and abilities; the opportunity to do things on their own; meaningful job assignments dealing with clients who are poor; a sense of personal satisfaction from the work at hand and a feeling that their work would not get done if they were not present.

Approximately 20% of the Volunteers were not happy with their jobs. A similar proportion of Volunteers reported that their jobs provided them with insufficient opportunity to use their skills and abilities; the people they worked with were not really poor, too much of their work was routine and repetitive; and their jobs were frustrating and not very rewarding personally.

Job Expectations Versus Reality

Before leaving the Volunteers' evaluations of their VISTA jobs, one other factor is worth considering. How well did the reality of the job assignments compare with job expectations at the end of training? Each Volunteer was asked to enumerate his or her job goals for the period ahead, and then asked:

> "How do these goals compare with what you thought you would accomplish at the end of training? Are your goals pretty much the same, or did you think you would accomplish more, less or different types of things in your year as a VISTA?"

Forty per cent of the Volunteers felt that their expectations and what they would probably accomplish in the next months were pretty much the same. Only 9% felt that they would accomplish less than they expected, and 27% said that they would accomplish different types of things than they expected. An unusually large group (23%) refrained from answering the question, probably reflecting a doubtful if not negative relationship between reality and original expectations.

As noted previously, many Volunteers questioned the lack of the community organization (or catalyst) component in their jobs. In many cases, the actual jobs, although service-oriented, were personally satisfying to to the Volunteer and considered meaningful for the client. As a result, job satisfaction ratings were higher than might be expected from the comments of the Volunteers. However, although personally satisfying and valuable for clients, many of the VISTA jobs did not seem to satisfy the built-in image of the Volunteer. This disparity in definition of the VISTA job was the biggest source of difference between Volunteer expectations and reality.

As the year went on and the training staff stressed the value of service jobs, a larger proportion of the Volunteers reported that their job goals and end-of-training expectations coincided. However, this increase was at the expense of fewer "no answers" (or doubtful Volunteers); the proportion of Volunteers (one-quarter to one-third) who expected to accomplish something different did not diminish as the year went on. Unless the VISTA job is defined broadly there is a good chance that a serious gap will occur between what the young Volunteer perceives as a VISTA job and what his job may turn out to be.

Desired Job Changes

The VISTA Volunteers in the sample were interviewed at the end of four months on the job; ahead lay at least six to eight more months of service. To further tap job feelings, Volunteers were asked if, in the months ahead, there were any changes they would like to see take place in what they were doing. (Most Volunteers had been on the same jobs throughout the first four months and not many changes in job assignments as such were anticipated by Supervisors. But changes in depth and scope of jobs were within the realm of possibility.)

It will be remembered that 22 Volunteers (20%) indicated outright dissatisfaction with their jobs. Many more Volunteers suggested changes they would like to see take place in their present jobs. (A total of 74 Volunteers, or 67% of the group, mentioned one or two possible changes in answer to this open-ended question.)

The alterations requested ranged all the way from transfers to another agency or job, to requests for more resources or more work. It is significant that the requests for a total change in job assignment were relatively few, only 27 persons (24%) requested completely new jobs. More frequently, Volunteers requested expansion and deepening of their present assignments.[1]

The principal changes mentioned, categorized according to the target of change, are summarized in the table on the following page.

The answers to the open-ended question on job change underscores the findings of the more structured questions. Volunteer unhappiness with work opportunities was relatively low by the end of four months. Desired change pertained, for most Volunteers, to deepening the impact of their present assignments and insuring that their VISTA time would be used most productively. Of the 27 Volunteers who wanted different jobs, 12 requested an opportunity to become involved in community organization, but there were others who desired an opportunity to teach, tutor or lead recreation. It would appear that among a randomly selected group of Volunteers there is wide diversity with respect to the type of job providing Volunteer satisfaction. There is reason to believe that service jobs, which frequently provide more rapid and concrete examples of success, are particularly appropriate to the younger, less mature Volunteers. The findings on Volun-

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[1] Four persons talked about transfer to another agency; three of these were subsequently effected.

TABLE 40 -- Changes in Work Requested by Volunteers

Type of Change	Volunteers Mentioning Number	Volunteers Mentioning Per cent
Expansion of Present Assignment	39	45.9
More work, more to do.	15	
Expand scope to deepen contribution, allow VISTAS to make more lasting impact.	10	
More responsibility.	8	
Miscellaneous: more resources, detailed job description, less clerical work, varied kinds of assignments.	6	
Change in Assignment to:	27	36.5
Community organization.	12	
Tutoring, teaching.	6	
Recreation.	2	
Bail Bond.	2	
Miscellaneous.	5	
Change Relating to Clients	12	16.2
Work more directly with clients.	6	
Responsibility for more clients.	2	
Work with different age group. (transfer to children) 2 (transfer to adults) 2	4	
Change Relating to Agency	12	14.9
Alteration in structure or policies of agency.	5	
Transfer to another agency.	4	
Better supervision.	3	
Total	175*	

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*Total adds up to more than 74 because some respondents stated changes in more than one area or mentioned several changes within an area.

teer job satisfaction underscore the importance of the proper matching of Volunteer and job at the Selection Board and upon arrival of the Volunteer in the agency. However, even more crucial to Volunteer happiness is a broad interpretation of the "VISTA job" during initial training.

CHAPTER VII

The Performance of the VISTA Volunteers

Evaluation of Training

As had been noted in the introduction, one of the principal objectives of the VISTA Research Study is an evaluation of the effectiveness of training received by VISTA Volunteers at the Columbia University School of Social Work during the fourteen month period, September 1965 to October 1966. Five separate training cycles compose this Columbia Training Program. Although experimental variations in training were instituted, the basic goals, staff orientation and learnings remained constant throughout. In this present report, the training program as a whole is the subject of evaluation. Future reports will deal with the impact of experimental variations on training effectiveness.

Measures of Effectiveness

The research design of the VISTA Research Study provides for three measures of the effectiveness of training:

....Changes, if any, in basic attitudes considered germane to the performance of the VISTA role.

....The level of performance achieved in the VISTA job as evaluated by the Direct Supervisors most familiar with the work of the Volunteers.

....Evaluative reactions of Volunteers and Direct Supervisors to specific aspects of Columbia VISTA training.

If training is effective, we hypothesize that positive changes will occur in attitudes, that the level of performance on the job will be at least moderately high, and that the Volunteers and Supervisors will find, in retrospect, that the training helped prepare the Volunteers for their VISTA jobs.

In the pages that follow, we shall present the results of two measures of effectiveness: the performance of the Volunteers on their respective jobs, and the reactions of Volunteers and Supervisors to the utility of training at Columbia. A separate report will deal with attitudinal change and will include change, if any, resulting from training as well as from four months of VISTA field experience.

The performance ratings are viewed as a crucial test of the effectiveness of training. However, these performance ratings also have independent value for VISTA as an indication of the amount of institutional success an average group of Volunteers (chosen randomly from among a pool of eligible applicants) can achieve in a four-month period in urban poverty. They also provide insights into the performance characteristics associated with a successful VISTA Volunteer as assessed by VISTA sponsors.

Unquestionably, Supervisor ratings involve more than evaluation of task performance; they also include the ability of the Volunteer to get along on the job. In urban poverty, as we have seen, Volunteers are inextricably tied up with their Sponsoring Agencies and ability to adapt to the agency is an important part of successful VISTA performance. Supervisory ratings, therefore, also can be interpreted as a measure of the degree to which the Volunteers can adapt to the widely differing social structures of 43 agencies spread across the country and still perform their VISTA roles.

The second measurement of training comes from interviews with 111 Volunteers and 75 Direct Supervisors. In these interviews, respondents discussed a wide range of topics, including the preparation received at Columbia and its relevance to the VISTA task. Although the individuals involved in training are not necessarily the best judges of the effectiveness of training, their perceptions can illuminate what occurred and increase understanding of both attitudinal change and performance ratings. It must be remembered that both Volunteers and Supervisors have a yardstick by which to judge training: how well it prepared the Volunteers to perform their VISTA assignments.

The Performance Ratings

Why Performance Ratings?

Although it is valuable to examine the reactions of participants to training programs at the end of such courses and in retrospect after job experience (See Chapter VIII,) the real proof of the effectiveness of training lies in what the trained participants can do in the real life situation. In many training evaluations, it is impossible to follow students to their jobs and record their level of performance. Fortunately this present study was able to do just that. Direct Supervisors who knew the participants intimately on the job were asked for evaluations of the Volunteers' performance after four months of work. As mentioned previously this four-month point was purposely chosen to allow for adjustment to agency and job, yet still be close enough to the training program to be reasonably sure that training influences were being observed.

Performance on the job is, of course, not merely a correlate of training. Factors such as personality and previous background of the Volunteer, type of placement, relationship of Supervisor and Volunteer, and environment of the agency all influence the performance of a Volunteer. It is difficult, therefore, to isolate the exclusive influence of training.[1] To do so would require a controlled experimental situation with two groups of matched Volunteers, one trained, the other untrained, both working in the same agencies and jobs and evaluated by the same Supervisors. Such an experiment bears no relationship to what is possible in the real world in which VISTA must operate. In the absence of a central group, we are forced to attempt to extrapolate as best we can the impact of training on performance.

In our present study we do, however, have the advantage of five similar groups of Volunteers exposed in five different training cycles to the same training learnings, orientation and experience. Should each class exhibit a similar level of success, we can speak with greater confidence of the effectiveness of the Columbia training program.[2]

Aspects of Training Measured in Performance Ratings

What were the gaps in the knowledge and skills of the Volunteers that training attempted to fill and that are evaluated by the performance ratings?

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[1] The present report concentrates on the relationship of training to performance. Future reports will deal with agency, job, and characteristics of Volunteers as correlates of performance.

[2] According to Herbert H. Hyman in the classic book on evaluation, Applications and Methods of Evaluation, the replication of an inquiry tends to randomize extraneous factors and may be regarded as a substantial test of the generality of the findings. Such replication enhances validity substantially.

First and foremost was the introduction to the culture of poverty and the minimization of the resultant culture shock. Most Volunteers came from affluent white middle-class America; they had read about poverty but rarely experienced it. Without an adequate introduction to the people and life of the urban ghetto, functioning on the job would be practically impossible. Such a gradual introduction was a prime consideration of the Columbia training program. It is reflected in the overall evaluation questions on the performance rating and in such specific items as ability to relate to clients, to talk with clients and discover problems, etc. (There are also questions in the interviews with the Volunteers and Supervisors which evaluate the Volunteers' ability to understand and work with the poor. See Chapter VIII.)

Another important group of learnings, stressed in the Columbia program and measured in the performance ratings, relates to adjustment to agency and acceptance of supervision. Most of the Volunteers had little prior experience with the social welfare field and with the particular nature of the helping role. VISTA, for many, represented their first full-time adult job and their first protracted experience with supervision and agency patterns of work. In fieldwork, the trainees were placed directly in agencies and performed under the supervision of agency personnel. Effective fieldwork experience, it was hypothesized, would enable a Volunteer to make an adequate adjustment to agency and supervision. Among the items on the performance rating form reflecting this training are questions pertaining to ability to accept supervision, respect for agency rules, understanding of the purpose and philosophy of the agency, willingness to perform routine work if necessary, etc.

Although the ability to relate to other people is heavily influenced by the experience of the Volunteer prior to entering VISTA, the Columbia Training Program attempted to enhance and enlarge these sensitivities. A better understanding and acceptance of one's self and a sensitivity toward one's impact on others was an important part of the Columbia Training Program. Relational skills were also one of the principal criteria in selection of VISTA Volunteers. It is to be expected that this sensitivity training would be reflected in a high level of relational skill on the job. Questions pertaining to the Volunteers' ability to relate to clients, other VISTAS, staff and Supervisor and ability to work with various groups of clients are found on the performance rating forms.

The final area of training stressed by Columbia was introduction to skills and work habits necessary for effectively carrying out the job. An attempt was made in discussions and through tasks assigned in field work to identify certain skills germane to working with the poor. As has been noted, the training staff was not aware of the specific agencies to which Volunteers would go, so that such skill training was generic and cut across agency and program lines. This attempt to, at least minimally, prepare the Volunteers for their jobs is reflected in such performance rating items as ability to organize and work with a group, ability to follow through on a task, to gather facts and make a plan of action, to use the telephone on behalf of clients, etc.

The performance rating contains, in addition, two other types of ratings. The first are measures of the overall performance of the Volunteer, including the amount of difference the Volunteer made in the lives of the people with whom he worked, whether the agency would invite the VISTA Volunteer to continue for another year, and ratings on overall job competence and overall success as a Volunteer.

The second group are items measuring such personality dimensions as maturity, flexibility, dependability, passivity and frustration tolerance. It is hypothesized that these factors contribute to performance, but they are not considered alterable in a six-week training course. They will be used primarily in future analyses of factors contributing to Volunteer success.

To summarize, the principal learnings, measured by the supervisory performance rating form used in the present study, are acculturation to poverty, adaptation to agency and job, ability to perform certain job-oriented tasks and relational fluency. These learnings were stressed in the Columbia training program and, it is hypothesized, should be reflected in positive levels of performance in the field. Most germane to the training was introduction to the poor and adjustment to the agency, followed in order by relational skills and job-oriented skills. Personality dimensions, although included in the form as background, do not relate to an evaluation of training as such. The overall evaluation performance ratings gives an all-inclusive view of the performance of the Volunteers as a group and forms a basis for future analysis of data.

Methodology of Performance Rating

The items included on the rating form grew out of conversations with the members of the training staff around criteria for effective VISTA performance. They embody the major goals of the training program. However, the interviews with the VISTA Volunteers and the Direct Supervisors contained other questions that pertain either directly or indirectly to the effectiveness of training. The response to these questions should be considered along with the material on Volunteer performance in a total evaluation of the Columbia Training Program.

The evaluation form, used by the Supervisors to rate the performance of the Volunteers, consists of 31 items dealing with various aspects of carrying out the VISTA job. (See Appendix IV for replica of form.) The majority of items are presented in the form of seven-point graphic rating scales with descriptive statements anchoring both ends. (Some scales had a midpoint statement as well.) Such scales allow Supervisors to make fine discriminations and allow numerous types of statistical comparisons.

All rating scales carry the potential of systematic error, particularly of the halo type. In order to reduce error, the items were kept as narrow and behaviorally specific as possible; where needed, definitions were supplied in order to reduce the room for individual interpretation and increase comparability of results. It should be noted that 75 Supervisors of diverse backgrounds and training were involved in making these ratings. Thus the number of different items and raters is sufficiently great to reduce systematic errors. The typical seven-point scale used to measure the amout of the attribute present is as follows:

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/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/
1     2     3     4     5     6     7
Very                                Considerable
Little
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Raters

The Direct Supervisors of the Volunteers, as the agency people who had most frequent contact with the Volunteers and were most cognizant of their work, were asked to rate the performance of the VISTAS. The majority of the Supervisors talked with the Volunteeers at least a few times per week and were closely involved in the formulation and the direction of the jobs in which the Volunteers were involved. The Supervisors were considered, therefore, to be equipped to rate both specific job skills and overall effectiveness of the Volunteers.

Such ratings are in effect institutional evaluation and do not necessarily reflect client appraisal of Volunteer performance. Client evaluations, though desirable, were unattainable in the present study. However, since VISTA Volunteers work through agencies, particularly in larger urban areas, the degree of satisfaction evidenced by Sponsors may well determine the future of the VISTA program.

Evaluation of Overall Performance

The overall evaluation of the Volunteers by their Supervisors gives us a quick reading of Volunteer success and effectiveness of training. We can then break this success down into its component parts and relate them to specific aspects of training.

The rating form contains three items measuring overall success, the correlation among the ratings on all three items was very high.

The first item is an overall evaluation of the individual's success as a VISTA Volunteer. The results are shown in Table 41.

TABLE 41 - Overall Evaluation of Success

Point Value	Rating	Percent of Volunteers	Level of Success	
1	Superb, a rare Volunteer	17.6	High	17.6
2	Very good, consistently effective and dependable	38.9	Middle	62.1
3	Good, a solid Volunteer, but without distinction	23.2		
4	Fair, needs supervision to keep him effective	14.8	Low	20.4
5	Poor, sometimes is more trouble than he/she is worth	5.6		

(Mean = 2.52   S.D. = 1.11)

A look at the ratings of the Volunteers' overall performance indicates that the average rating for the VISTA Volunteers in our sample is relatively high; the mean (2.52) falls squarely between good (a solid Volunteer, but without distinction) and very good (consistently effective and dependable).

However, there are variations in performance among the Volunteers, and the percentage distribution for each of the categories reveals an almost normal distribution of performance ratings. The largest group composed of about 60% of the Volunteers received solidly positive, middle-range ratings (good or very good) while two smaller groups, composed of approximately 20% of the Volunteers in each, were rated very high (superb) or very low (fair or poor). In future analysis, the high and low performers may supply the clue to what causes success or failure in VISTA.

The second measure of overall performance reinforces the picture of success of a majority of the Volunteers. Three-quarters of the Supervisors indicated that, if the question arose, they would invite their VISTA Volunteers to stay another year.

TABLE 42 - Supervisors Ask VISTAS to Remain Another Year

Response	Percent of Volunteers
Yes	74.3
No	14.7
Maybe, if improved	11.0

There is again, however, a group of Volunteers with whom the Supervisors are dissatisfied. The Supervisors indicated that there were fifteen percent of the Volunteers whom they would not invite to remain for another year, and eleven percent whom they might invite back if their work improves.

The final measure of overall success has to do with impact on clients. We can get an idea of the degree of impact Supervisors feel the Volunteers have made by their responses to the question: "Do you think that the Volunteer's being here has made a difference in the lives of the people with whom he has worked?" The Supervisors rated the Volunteers on a seven-point scale, ranging from 1 (very little difference) to 4 (some difference) to 7 (quite a lot of difference). The distribution of ratings is as follows:

Degree of Difference	Rating	Percent of Volunteers
Minimal	1-3	12.7
Some	4	26.4
Moderate	5-6	41.8
Quite a lot	7	19.1

If we consider the fact that the Volunteers have only been on the job four months at the time of the evaluation, this is quite an impressive rating. Sixty percent of the Volunteers are felt to have made at least a moderate amount of difference in the lives of their clients.

From these measures of overall performance, we can deduce that most Volunteers were able to effectively carry out their VISTA jobs and that they achieved at least a moderately high level of performance. There were, however, a group of Volunteers approximately (20%)who had difficulty carrying out their VISTA assignments as well as another group approximately 20% who were superb, truly outstanding Volunteers.

Relational Fluency

In addition to overall rating of success, the Supervisors evaluated the Volunteers on a series of criteria related to carrying out a job in an agency. These criteria items are shown in Table 43 , grouped into factors that coincide with major training emphases. A glance at this Table indicates that the Volunteers were rated above average on all criteria items, indicating a better than moderate level of performance on each item for the group as a whole.[1]

We can see in which areas of performance the Supervisors felt the Volunteers were most successful by looking at the items on which the Volunteers were rated most highly. The Supervisors rated the Volunteers particularly well on their ability to relate to others.

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[1] In almost all items, the midpoint (or average rating) of the 7-point scale is 4. With point 1 low and point 7 high.

TABLE 43 - VISTAS' Relationships to Others

	Per Cent of Volunteers					
	Very Well (1)	Good (2)	Average (3)	Not too Well/Poor (4 and 5)	Mean[1]	S.D.
Supervisor	53.3	29.9	15.0	1.9	1.65	0.80
Clients	45.9	32.1	19.3	2.8	1.79	0.85
Agency Staff	46.2	31.7	17.3	4.8	1.81	0.89
Other VISTAS	37.5	40.6	13.5	8.4	1.99	1.08

Most Volunteers were considered to relate well or very well to the four principal groups of people with whom they associate in their agency VISTA jobs: clients (mean of 1.79 on 5-point scale with 1 high and 5 low), Supervisors (mean of 1.65), other agency staff (mean of 1.81), and other VISTAS (mean of 1.99).

One might expect young, action-oriented Volunteers to relate better to clients than to Supervisors and other agency staff. However, tests of significance indicate that there is no significant difference between the ability of the Volunteer to get along with clients as opposed to the other groups shown. This bears out findings presented elsewhere of the very favorable relationships most Volunteers had with their Supervisors and agencies. It is remarkable to note that over 50% of the Volunteers were considered to relate very well to Supervisors, about 30% to relate well, and only 2% were considered to relate poorly to Supervisors.

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[1] In the case of ability to relate to Supervisor, clients, other VISTAS, agency staff, a five-point scale was used with a high of 1, a low of 5 and a mid-point of 2.5.

TABLE 44 -- Criteria Items and Performance of 111 Columbia Trained VISTA Volunteers by their Direct Supervisors

(Listed in rank order of highest rating within factor)

	Performance of Volunteers	
Criteria Item	Mean	S.D.
Adaptation to Agency		
1. *Acceptance of supervision	5.32	1.45
2. *Understanding of purpose and philosophy of agency	5.24	1.45
3. *Commitment to the agency, its programs and staff	5.20	1.62
4. *Respect for agency rules	5.02	1.71
Relational Fluency		
Ability to relate to:		
5. **Supervisors[1]	1.65	.80
6. **Clients[1]	1.79	.85
7. **Agency staff[1]	1.81	.89
8. **Other VISTAS[1]	1.99	1.08
9. *Ability to work with adults	5.30	1.38
10. *Ability to work with teenagers	5.26	1.41
11. *Ability to work with children	5.23	1.64
12. *Ability to work with senior citizens	5.17	1.34
Ability to Carry Out the Job		
13. *Commitment to the job	5.52	1.48
14. *Ability to use phone on behalf of clients	5.32	1.42
15. *Ability to meet and talk with strangers	5.27	1.81
16. *Ability to follow through on a given task	5.23	1.64
17. *Willingness to perform routine work if called upon	5.20	1.60
18. *Ability to talk with client and discover problems	5.13	1.53
19. *Ability to gather facts and make an appropriate plan of action	5.12	1.55
20. *Resourcefulness in solving problems	5.10	1.72
21. *Ability to communicate in written form	5.03	1.62
22. *Ability to effectively organize own work and time schedule.	5.03	1.56
23. *Ability to plan or develop a new program	4.94	1.61
24. *Ability to organize and work with a group	4.90	1.42

*Seven-point graphic rating scale with midpoint of 4.

**Five-point scale with midpoint of 2.5.

[1] In this question high and low were reversed. High is therefore 1, average is 2.5 and low is 5. Thus these are relatively high means indicating considerable ability.

TABLE 44 -- Criteria Items and Performance of 111 Columbia Trained VISTA Volunteers by their Direct Supervisors--Continued

	Performance of Volunteers	
Criteria Item	Mean	S.D.
Personality Factors		
25. Tolerance (openness to new ideas and people)	5.11	1.48
26. Maturity (ability to assume responsibility for self and work, use self-discipline, carry out assigned task with minimum distraction)	5.00	1.73
27. Flexibility (ability to accept and adjust to new, rapidly changing or uncertain situations without undue strain)	4.86	1.57
28. Frustration tolerance (ability to accept rapid change, confusion, work pressure or frustration and still continue to work towards goal)	4.76	1.57
Style of Performing Job		
29. Passive (waits for job) versus active (seeks out job)	5.00	1.76
30. Dependent (needs constant supervision) versus independent (likes to be left alone except when in trouble)	5.03	1.58

The Volunteers' ability to get along with clients was rated in a similarly positive manner. (50% relate very well, 32% well, 19% averagely, and 3% poorly.)

The Volunteers' relational skill with clients is also reflected in the high ratings received on items 5-12. The Volunteers are seen to work well with clients of all ages: children (mean 5.23 on a 7 point scale), teenagers (mean 5.26 on a 7 point scale), and adults (mean 5.30 on a 7 point scale.)[1]

The ability to relate to others is the primary quality for which VISTA has recruited. It is also one of the major points of emphasis of the Columbia training program, and was an important criterion in the assessment of potential Volunteers at the Selection Board. The Columbia trained Volunteers certainly reflect this emphasis on relational skill and their performance in this area is, with few exceptions, consistently high.

Adjustment to Agency

The Volunteers were rated relatively high on several items pertaining to adaptation to Agency (Table 44, Items 1-4,) another of the important training emphases. They received mean ratings ranging from 5.20 to 5.32 (out of a possible seven) on commitment to agency, its program and staff, understanding of the purpose and philosophy of the agency, and ability to accept supervision. The highest rating in the group of agency-adjustment items was acceptance of supervision, while Volunteers apparently had most difficulty in respecting agency rules (although here again the group performance mean is above average).

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[1] With respect to senior citizens, they appear to have slightly more difficulty (mean of 5.17 on a 7 point scale) but the number of Volunteers involved with persons over 65 was few, and therefore the rating has less significance.

The Supervisors' very positive rating of the Volunteers' ability to accept supervision is in line with the Volunteers' generally positive reaction to their Supervisors. The relationship seems to have been a mutually satisfying one.

Our data seems to indicate a tendency for Volunteers to build close personal attachments with Supervisors, but not necessarily to carry over this allegiance to the more confining aspects of the agency such as rules and regulations. We know that at least 18-20% of the Volunteers were considered by their Supervisors as having some difficulty adjusting to the agency. It appears that matters of dress, reporting on time, and following set procedures and channels are the areas that cause Volunteers the most difficulty in their transition from adolescence to adult maturity. Time would appear to be the biggest factor in adaptation to agency limitations.

It is important to note that the Columbia trained Volunteers successfully accepted the positive role of agencies (according to the performance ratings) and were able to build considerable commitment to their own Sponsoring Agency, its program and staff, within a four-month period. In training, fieldwork agencies were carefully selected to represent the most positive in social agencies and professional supervision. This exposure, together with discussions of the nature and reason for agencies, apparently helped set the foundation on which positive adaptation to agency was achieved by most of the Volunteers.

Ability to Carry Out the Job

A total of 12 items on the rating form (Table 44, Items 13-24) pertain to ability to carry out various aspects of the job. On all of these items the Volunteers as a group received above average ratings. (Means of 5 or better on 10 out of 12 of the items, and means of 4.90 and 4.94 on the other two items.)

The central item in the group was commitment to job. The mean rating for commitment to job, 5.52 on a 7-point scale, represents both the highest mean in the group and the highest single mean of any item on the entire evaluation form. Commitment to job is probably the outstanding performance characteristic noted by everyone we met associated with VISTA Volunteers. It is interesting to recall, in the light of this finding, that when the Volunteers entered training, they felt that the most important qualities for success in VISTA would be hard work and commitment to the job.

Volunteers were also rated somewhat higher on ability to follow through on a given task and willingness to perform routine work if called upon. Both of these appear related to job commitment.

Two items were somewhat less highly rated, indicating slightly less performance success. These skills were the ability to plan or develop a new program (mean of 4.94 out of 7) and the ability to organize and work with a group (mean of 4.90). (Volunteers apparently were better able to relate on an individual basis to a client.) It is likely that it takes considerable time to develop much skill in working with groups or planning or developing a new program. Such abilities may have to be mainly acquired on the job over a longer period of time than four months. Although these skills were thought to be included in the Columbia curriculum, training was somewhat less effective with respect to them.

The rating form contained one overall estimate of job performance that probably offers the best measurement of the level of job performance of the Columbia trained Volunteers. Supervisors answered the following question with the ratings shown below.

Question: All in all, how do you evaluate the job competence of the Volunteer as demonstrated in his/her assignments to date?

Point Value	Rating	Percentage of Volunteers
1	Extremely competent-can be counted on to do an outstanding job	16.5
2	Very competent; does excellent work	37.6
3	Clearly adequate; not outstanding	29.4
4	Just adequate	9.2
5	Doubtful	5.5
6	Clearly unsatisfactory	1.8

(Mean of 2.55, S.D. of 1.15).

In the case of overall job competence, the Volunteers on the average were rated between "clearly adequate, not outstanding" and "very competent, does excellent work." Again if we look at the distribution of ratings, we find a normal curve with about 17% of the Volunteers being considered outstanding on job competence, 65% falling in the middle range of clearly competent and 17% of the Volunteers' job competence being considered barely adequate or even unsatisfactory. This is the same pattern as was observed with respect to the evaluation of the overall success of the Volunteers except that in job competence there is a slightly smaller percentage of Volunteers in the upper and lower ranges while the middle range is somewhat larger.

Apparently, the overall level of job competence is rated somewhat lower than the level of overall performance (or Volunteer success - see p. 205). This supports our hypothesis that the performance of VISTA Volunteers in the eyes of Supervisors is more than job skills and includes as well aspects of relational fluency and ability to adapt to the environment and become integrated within the institutional setting of the agency. All of these appear to be factors that go into making up successful VISTA performance.

Personality Factors

The Volunteers were least highly rated, although the ratings were still above average, on the personality factors of frustration tolerance (mean 4.75 on a 7-point scale), flexibility (mean 4.86), and maturity (mean 5.00). These factors are, to some extent, related to age and experience and we have spoken before about the youth and general lack of job experience of most of the Volunteers in our sample. Six weeks of training cannot materially affect such basic dimensions of personality. The one item of the personality group rated somewhat highly by Supervisors was tolerance, openness to new ideas and people. Training contributed to exposure to new ideas and different types of people, but we would hypothesize that most persons selected for an experience like VISTA are relatively "open" people.

Distribution of Ratings on Criterion Items

An examination of the distribution of ratings on criterion items shows a similar trend to that revealed in the overall evaluation ratings. That is, there is a consistently large group of approximately 60% of the Volunteers rated as average or slightly above, and two smaller groups of about 20% each received very high and low ratings. A further investigation of these three groups reveals that they are generally composed of the same Volunteers. That is, Volunteers receiving low ratings on one criterion item fairly consistently received low ratings on the other criteria, and similarly with Volunteers receiving average ratings and high ratings.

Profile of Volunteers' Skills

From the above material, one can form a tentative profile of the skills evidenced by a sample of 111 urban VISTA Volunteers, as evaluated by their Direct Supervisors. Above all, they appear to be committed to their jobs and able to very successfully relate to others, including clients, Supervisor, agency staff, and to a lesser extent, other VISTAS. Most made an adequate adjustment to Sponsoring Agency, understood its principles and policies, and were committed to carrying out its program. They were less able to accept agency rules and limitations, and were to some extent limited in their ability to perform some of the helping tasks such as working with groups, planning new programs, and discovering clients' needs. They were eager to learn and very open to new ideas and people, but somewhat hampered in their VISTA efforts by youth, immaturity and lack of work experience.

Performance Level by Training Cycle

The Columbia Training Program evaluated herein was composed of five training cycles spread over a period of 14 months. Looking at the cycles individually, we find some differences between the overall performance ratings cycle to cycle. Columbia IV received the highest overall rating (mean 2.17; S.D. .98),[1] and Columbia VII, the next highest rating (mean 2.39; S.D. 1.16). The middle rank went to Columbia III (mean 2.50; S.D. 1.25.). Columbia VI received the lowest overall rating (mean 2.86; S.D. 1.03,) and Columbia V, the next lowest rating (mean 2.75; S.D. 1.11.)

However, in spite of differences, the overall evaluations of all five classes are within the good to very good range and indicate a relatively high level of performance.

Effectiveness of Columbia Training Program

In the final analysis, training success rests upon Volunteer ability to perform on the job. We hypothesized that an effective training program would result in at least a moderately high level of Volunteer performance as judged by the Direct Supervisors in the field. Our findings indicate that at the four-month point most of the Columbia trained Volunteers related well to the poor and to others with whom they worked, had made a good adjustment to agency and job, and were showing above average job skills in most areas. According to their Supervisors they were making a positive difference in the lives of the poor with whom they worked. This overall performance of the Volunteers as a group and the performance of each of the five training cycles is sufficiently high to support an initial finding that the Columbia training program achieved its primary goal of effectively preparing VISTA Volunteers for productive service in urban poverty. For an understanding of why the training program was effective and the relative value of the various component parts, the reactions of the Volunteers and Supervisors presented in the next chapter is relevant.

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[1] 2 = very good, and 3 = good

Successful VISTA Performance

Criteria Items Most Associated with Successful VISTA Performance

In order to arrive at a tentative[1] picture of the dimensions of performance associated with the more successful Volunteer as compared with the less successful, we ran correlations between the 30 criterion items shown in Table 41 and the overall rating of Volunteer success. The higher the correlation the more likely the criterion item is to be associated with VISTA success.

In Table 45, the correlation coefficients are shown for the 30 items. It would appear that there are 11 items that correlated highly

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[1] The correlations are based on a N of 88 available at the time rather than the total N of 111. It is unlikely that additional cases will seriously alter the trends reported.

TABLE 45 -- Correlation Coefficients (r) of Criterion Items With Overall Evaluation Rating

	Overall Evaluation
Highly Correlated (r ≥ .50)	
Maturity	r = .62
Independence	.59
Resourcefulness	.59
Flexibility	.56
Telephone on behalf of a client	.56
Talk with client and discover problem	.53
Organize own work	.53
Follow through on job	.52
Work with adults	.52
Gather facts and plan action	.51
Commitment to job	.51
Moderately Correlated (.28 ≥ r ≤ .49)	
Openness to new ideas and people	r = .49
Communicate in writing	.44
Respect for agency rules	.44
Willingness to do routine tasks	.43
Frustration tolerance	.42
Develop new program	.41
Accept supervision	.40
Meet and talk with strangers	.37
Commitment to agency	.37
Relate to clients	.36
Understand role of agency	.36
Work with teenagers	.33
Active (seeks out job)	.33
No Significant Correlation at .005 level (r < .28)	
Organize and work with groups	r = .27
Work with children	.26
Relate to agency staff	.24
Relate to supervisor	.23
Work with senior citizens	.09
Relate to other VISTAS	.03

with the overall evaluation (r = .50 or above); 13 items that are moderately correlated (r = .28 to .49) and 6 items for which there is no significant correlation.

The item that correlates most highly with success is maturity (r = .62); although independence (r = .59), resourcefulness (r = .59) and flexibility (r = .56) also correlate highly with success. The successful Volunteer, then, is one who can function on his own, one who can adapt to changes and accept lack of structure. The Supervisors see the main component of this style of functioning to be maturity.

Also highly correlated with success are some of the skills connected with carrying out the job--such as ability to follow through on the job, commitment to the job, ability to talk with a client and discover his problems and ability to plan and organize work and time schedule.

We find that factors such as acceptance of and adaptation to agency and acceptance of supervision are of secondary importance as correlates of success (although all of these are moderately correlated with success.) It would seem that in evaluating success in a VISTA Volunteer, Supervisors make a distinction between the highly productive Volunteer who may not necessarily adapt rapidly to the agency, and the less productive but more conforming Volunteer.

It will be interesting in the future to study the background characteristics of the Volunteers to determine if, as the data suggests, age and experience are important discriminators between the successful and unsuccessful Volunteer. It may well be that other factors such as education and initial attitudes are also primary correlates of successful performance.

Factors Considered Relevant to Success By Supervisors

To underscore performance factors associated with success, the Direct Supervisors were asked in their interviews what personal characteristics and/or attitudes toward the agency they felt distinguished the successful VISTA Volunteers. The Supervisors' answers can be categorized into three main groupings in order of frequency of mention: 1) personality characteristics of the Volunteer, 2) the extent to which the Volunteer adapted to the agency in which he worked, and 3) skills and knowledge to carry out the job. Although all three factors were considered important by the Supervisors, almost 90% responded that personality factors were crucial to the success of a Volunteer.

When we look at the specific personality factors enumerated by the Supervisors, we see the same picture emerging as that derived from the performance evaluation. The successful Volunteer is described as being mature, flexible, enthusiastic and highly motivated to help.

In discussing the Volunteer's adaptation to the Agency, the Supervisors felt that it was of primary importance for the Volunteer to accept the agency as a vehicle for action. The Supervisors also felt a successful Volunteer must accept the agency structure with its rules, regulations and policy, and the job as defined by the agency, and, of course, supervision.

The most important skill that the successful Volunteer has is that of being able to work with people, according to the Supervisors.

Factors Considered Relevant by VISTA Volunteers

The VISTA Volunteers were also asked what characteristics they felt distinguished the successful Volunteer. The Volunteers, as the Supervisors, felt strongly that personality characteristics were of primary importance. The specific personality characteristics that the Volunteers described as most important included the same traits that the Supervisors described: maturity, flexibility, enthusiasm and the motivation to help. In addition, the Volunteers feel that tolerance of others is a critical factor.

Only a small percentage of the Volunteers mentioned adaptation to the agency as a major characteristic of the successful Volunteer. (However, in the question put to Supervisors, attitudes toward agency was mentioned as a part of the question, while it was not specifically mentioned in the question put to the Volunteers.)

Skills and knowledge were considered of primary importance by the Volunteers, particularly the ability to work with people, and knowledge and understanding of the poor. Supervisors considered skills of less importance and apparently are not as concerned about VISTA Volunteers as "skilled helpers" in the sense of trained social workers or educators.

Some Correlates of Success in VISTA

From our research to date, it would appear that there are certain important dimensions to institutional success as a VISTA Volunteer.[1]

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[1] It is possible that seen through the eyes of the client or neighbors a successful VISTA Volunteer might be very different. However, we are talking about success within the agency framework in which most urban VISTA Volunteers are called upon to function.

Both Volunteers and Supervisors point to maturity, flexibility, enthusiasm and motivation to help as being essential. Our correlation of criteria items with success gives a similar picture of maturity, independence, resourcefulness and flexibility as key personality dimensions.

Also correlated are basic skills necessary to carrying out a job and to a lesser extent ability to adapt to agency. But adjustment to agency and job skills are not as important as a mature and independent style of functioning.

However we have not investigated the impact of agency and job factors on success as a VISTA Volunteer. This will be the subject of a future report at which time we will have a more complete picture of all that goes into VISTA success and in what order of importance.

Meanwhile in the training and selection of VISTA Volunteers consideration should be given to questions of maturity and ability to function flexibly with resourcefulness and independence in a changing environment.

CHAPTER VIII

Volunteers and Supervisors React to Training

Introduction

An important part of the evaluation of the Columbia Training Program lies in the reactions of the Volunteers and their Direct Supervisors, solicited in depth interviews after the Volunteers were on the job four months. Volunteers, in these interviews, were asked to recall their training and relate it to their experience in the field as a VISTA Volunteer. In the light of their job experience, they appraised the effectiveness of their preparation and the extent to which their end-of-training expectations coincided with reality as they perceived it. In addition, they noted the parts of the VISTA training considered most helpful and those which should be stressed in future training.

Supervisors reacted to the level of training preparation as reflected in the Volunteers' behavior in the agency and on the job. They also were most helpful in pinpointing areas of training deserving of greater attention in future training programs.

Both groups discussed at length whether the training of VISTA Volunteers should be carried out under VISTA auspices prior to assignment to Sponsoring Agencies, or whether such training most appropriately should be given directly in the Sponsoring Agency by agency staff.

Relevance of Columbia Training
to Present VISTA Job

Volunteers were asked to reflect upon the helpfulness of Columbia training in preparing for their present VISTA jobs. Generally, the training was considered relevant, and was evaluated as either somewhat or very helpful by two-thirds of the Volunteers. A substantial minority (23%), however, felt their Columbia training was not especially helpful. The inadequacies will be discussed in the following sections.

Supervisors also tended to find the Columbia training beneficial, although they, too, specified areas that were overlooked or needed more attention in future training programs.

Preparation in Skills

Certain skills, germane to the helping role, were identified by the Columbia training staff. The trainees received exposure to these core skills; except for one six-session workshop in program skills, all such learning took place within the context of the field work placements. Depending on the programs of the field work agency, trainees were provided with varying opportunities to practice skills such as interviewing, leading a group, intervening on behalf of an individual, planning their own work, going into a slum building and talking to the poor, etc. It was hoped that a certain minimum level of experience would be provided in all skills regardless of the fieldwork agency or its particular program concentration at the moment.

To what extent was this hope realized? Volunteers and Supervisors, in the four-month interview, were asked to evaluate the level of preparation received at Columbia with respect to a list of seventeen skills basic to the helping process in an education or social welfare agency. (Since VISTA Volunteers were being trained for community action rather than therapeutic intervention, the list is heavily weighted toward skills involved in reaching out to clients and assisting them to organize and secure needed services.)

Tables 46 and 47 , show the 17 skills and how well prepared the Volunteers and Supervisors considered the VISTAs to be in each. For ease of comprehension, the items are divided into three categories: skills involved in establishing contacts with the poor, methods of work involved in carrying out a job, and skills germane to sustaining a program.

Several important conclusions can be drawn from tables 46 and 47. In the first instance, Columbia was particularly effective in training Volunteers to make initial contact with the poor. Well over half of the Volunteers considered themselves "well prepared" and were considered "well prepared" by their Supervisors to "go into a slum building and knock on a door," or to "communicate with the poor in person or in writing." In addition, Supervisors felt that the Volunteers were "well-prepared" to go out into the neighborhood and recruit for a program; Volunteers were a little less sure of this. Volunteers also felt well equipped to make neighborhood surveys to determine needs, a skill only a few actually used on their jobs.

All in all, the Volunteers appeared to have received a solid preparation in establishing contact with their future clients. A rank order of the 17 items, according to the proportion of "well-prepared" Volunteers, reveals that the three or four highest ranked items are skills involved in making contact with the poor.

TABLE 46.-- Degree of Preparation of Columbia Trained Volunteers in Skills Germane to Helping Role as Perceived by Volunteers

(Rank order according to percentage well-prepared)
N = 111

Rank Order	Skills	Percent of Volunteers		
		Well Prepared	Adequately Prepared	Not Well Prepared
	Initial Contact with Poor	%	%	%
1	Go into a slum building and knock on door	68.3	23.6	8.1
2	Communicate with poor in person or in writing	54.1	25.2	20.7
3	Make a neighborhood survey to determine needs	52.3	22.5	25.2
7	Interview	40.5	39.6	19.9
13	Publicize a program, recruit for it	31.5	37.9	30.6
	Ways of Work			
4	Work jointly with other agencies on behalf of client	49.1	30.9	20.0
5	Plan project jointly with other staff members	46.3	40.0	13.7
6	Initiate action on one's own	44.5	40.9	14.6
9	Gather, analyze facts and make a suitable plan of action	40.0	30.9	29.1
14	Compile a list of community resources	35.5	37.2	27.3
15	Organize one's work and time schedule	27.9	40.6	31.5
	Sustaining Program			
8	Counsel and act on behalf of a client	40.5	37.0	22.5
10	Work with groups	39.4	37.6	23.0
11	Lead games, recreation	38.5	24.8	36.7
12	Organize a group (tenants, etc.)	36.9	30.6	32.5
16	Tutor	18.2	15.5	66.3
17	Assist in pre-school	14.6	11.8	73.6

TABLE 47 -- Degree of Preparation of Columbia Trained Volunteers in Skills Germane to Helping Role as Perceived by Supervisors

(in rank order according to percentage considered well-prepared)

Rank Order	Skills	N[1]	Percent of Volunteers Well Prepared	Adequately Prepared	Not Well Prepared
	Initial Contact with Poor				
1	Go into a slum building and knock on door	69	63.9	18.8	17.3
3	Publicize a program, recruit	53	54.7	30.2	15.1
5	Communicate with poor in writing or in person	88	51.1	33.0	15.9
12	Make a neighborhood survey to determine needs	41	36.6	51.2	12.2
13	Interview	75	36.0	28.0	36.0
	Ways of Work				
4	Work jointly with other agencies on behalf of client	70	54.4	27.1	18.5
6	Initiate action on own	85	48.2	24.7	27.1
7	Plan project with other staff members	75	45.9	43.5	10.6
8	Organize your work and time schedule	90	45.6	28.9	25.5
10	Gather, analyze facts, make a suitable plan of action	71	43.3	35.2	22.5
17	Compile list of community resources	47	27.6	29.8	42.6
	Sustaining Program				
2	Tutor	56	60.7	28.6	10.7
9	Counsel and act on behalf of a client	74	43.3	29.7	27.0
11	Lead games, recreation	63	39.7	28.6	31.7
14	Organize a group	50	32.0	28.0	40.0
15	Assist in pre-school	33	30.4	18.2	51.4
16	Work with groups	77	28.6	38.9	32.5

[1] The total N's vary due to two factors: Supervisors refrained from rating the degree of preparation if the Volunteers didn't use skills on the job and a few Supervisors refrained from answering entire question

This does not mean, however, that all Volunteers were well prepared to make initial contacts. In the case of most items in this classification, anywhere from eight to twenty per cent of the group was not well prepared, while at least one-third of the Volunteers were poorly prepared in the art of interviewing.

Training in establishing contact with the poor was given high priority by the Columbia staff. Such an ability, it was felt, underlies all VISTA jobs and makes living in the neighborhood a meaningful possibility. For the middle class Volunteer, the fieldwork opportunities to go into slum buildings, knock on doors, talk to the poor about their needs was seen as the initial step in alleviating culture shock and in providing a solid foundation upon which to build other program skills. The high level of preparation of the Columbia Volunteers in this aspect of the VISTA role reflects this concentration. The direct exposure to the poor, provided during training, could well be one of the explanations for the rapid adjustment of the Volunteers in their permanent placements (see Chapter VII for performance ratings by their Supervisors).

Equally significant is the finding that training in meeting and making contact with the poor cuts across agency and program lines. At Columbia, approximately 15 different social welfare agencies were used as fieldwork placements to provide a high level of training in this area for most of the Volunteers. Once the tasks involved were defined (i.e. knocking on doors, interviewing, making surveys, etc.), fieldwork agencies, ranging from neighborhood improvement associations to settlements to health centers, were able to provide the Volunteers with the necessary direct experience with the poor.

The Columbia training also was effective in preparing Volunteers in generic work habits. The ability to work jointly with other agencies on behalf of a client, or the ability to plan a project jointly with other staff makes it possible for the VISTA to function effectively within the total social welfare community. The ability to initiate action on ones own, gather facts and make a suitable plan of action, or organize ones time and work schedule enable the Volunteer to function independently and with minimum supervision. Obviously, such skills are not initially learned in VISTA; trainees bring with them work habits and personality characteristics that influence thier behavior in these areas. But during training, opportunities were provided to strengthen existing skills and to maximize effective ways of work.

Preparation in the ways-of-work area reflects a moderate level of training success: approximately 40-50% of the Volunteers were considered "well prepared" to carry out their own work and/or work jointly with others. The proportion considered "not well prepared" in many of these skills rose to 20-30% of the Volunteers, a higher figure than is the case with respect to "meeting the poor" skills.

Again, training in work habits cut across agency lines. All trainees, regardless of the kind of fieldwork agency, had exposure to supervisors who stressed proper ways of work, apparently with some degree of uniform success.

In the group of items labeled "ways of work," one item stands out because of relatively poor preparation. Only 36% of the Volunteers felt "well prepared" to compile a list of community resources, while Supervisors considered even fewer Volunteers "well-prepared" (28%). At least one-third of the group was "poorly prepared." Volunteers, during field interviews, reported that lack of knowledge of community resources reduced their effectiveness as compared with other agency staff. Apparently during training they did not learn how to collect such information and the first four months on the job did little to remedy this training weakness.

A comprehensive knowledge of social resources comes with extensive experience, but it should be possible to introduce trainees to methods of obtaining such information and to give them some practice in compiling a simple beginning list. VISTA Volunteers report that referral is a large part of their work, particularly in the informal contacts with neighbors. Knowledge of the assistance available in a community is vital.

The final group of skills evaluated is classified under the general heading of skills involved in sustaining a program. Included here are some of the specific job skills most frequently employed by VISTA Volunteers in urban poverty (i.e. leading games and recreation, tutoring, counseling and intervening in behalf of a client, working with groups.) In this area, the Columbia training program appears weakest.

Only about one-third of the Volunteers felt "well-prepared" in such skills as counseling, working with groups, leading games and recreation and organizing a group. Another third rated themselves as "adequately prepared," while anywhere from one-quarter to more than one-third considered themselves poorly prepared in some of the program skills. Supervisors also tended to rate the level of preparation lower with respect to these skills. And as a group, these items were the lowest ranking items on the list. Of all the "program skills," Volunteers appeared to be best prepared to counsel and intervene on behalf of a client and to tutor.

One possible explanation for the lower level of preparation in specific program skills lies in the fact that the Columbia staff had no prior knowledge of the agencies or jobs to which the Volunteers would go. In one sense, therefore, they trained for skills in a vacuum. In order to give as comprehensive a picture as possible of many potential helping roles, many different types of fieldwork agencies were used. The program skills to which trainees were exposed depended in good part upon what was happening in the agencies at the particular training time. In one agency a trainee might spend most of his time with groups. In another, the concentration might be individual counseling. Recreation programs might predominate in a third agency while in a fourth, an active pre-school program might be underway. Although all field supervisors were urged to expose trainees to as many program skills as possible, this apparently was not always possible in the limited time allotted for field work.

The situation at Columbia regarding skill training was further complicated by lack of coordination between training and placement. Skill emphasized in fieldwork could bear little relation to what was needed on the job. More than one Volunteer, primarily involved in block organization during fieldwork, found herself placed as an assistant in a pre-school or teaching English in a job training program.

The situation with respect to tutoring is an interesting point in case. There is a sharp discrepancy between the tutoring preparation evaluation by the Volunteers and by the Supervisors. Few Volunteers were involved in tutoring during training and most considered themselves poorly prepared to tutor. Supervisors, on the other hand, rated their tutoring preparation as very high, second in rank to going into a slum building and making contact with the tenants. Apparently because of their college background, most Volunteers assigned to tutoring or teaching (56 persons according to Supervisors), adjusted very rapidly and were able to assimilate easily the required skill. As a result, they were rated well prepared, although this preparation reflected little "tutoring training" at Columbia.

The foregoing underscores the difficulty of training for specific job skills in a six-week period. So much training time must be spent on acclimating the trainees to poverty, to the agency and to VISTA, that little time is available to cover all possible program skills. Perhaps only an introduction to some of the more general skills can be given in six weeks of VISTA training, while specific skills related to specific jobs can best be learned within the context of the Sponsoring Agency.

There is a considerable foundation of important information about the poor, about agencies and about appropriate ways of work, as well as a sense of self-confidence and a commitment to VISTA that all Volunteers need, regardless of the specifics of their jobs. Such training is generic and can be provided in a great variety of field work agencies. At Columbia, about 15 different agencies successfully introduced trainees to the adult job world and to urban poverty and such diversity only added to the richness of the training experience. Undoubtedly, VISTA Volunteers need both generic and specific skill training. The former can be accomplished in many settings; for the latter training staffs must know something about projected job assignments and close coordination is needed between the training program and the eventual placement for which the Volunteer is being trained. The projected Regional Training Centers, training only for the agencies in a given area, should be in a better position to know the skills needed and can tailor the skill portion of VISTA training more closely to specified needs. Such coordination certainly would have improved the level of preparation of the Columbia trained Volunteers in the area of specific program skills.

Knowledge, Understanding and Commitment Gained Through Training

The foregoing indicates that the Columbia Training Program was successful in preparing Volunteers for some of the generic skills considered relevant to the VISTA job. Such preparation, though important, is only part of the foundation needed by a Volunteer.

The goals of VISTA training at Columbia included the imparting of certain basic attitudes and understanding concerning the poor and poverty, social agencies, concepts of social action, awareness of self and commitment to VISTA as a national movement. (See Chapter I for detailed description of training goals.) To what extent did the training program succeed in imparting these requisite attitudes and understanding to the trainees?

During the four-month interview, each Volunteer was given a series of 14 items relevant to the foregoing topics and was asked to rate, on a five point scale,[1] the extent to which training at Columbia contributed to a deepening of their knowledge and understanding with respect to each of these items. The items and the mean response for the III Volunteers as a group is shown in Table 48 which follows. The mid-point of the scale is point 3 (some contribution.) The higher the mean score, the more the training program contributed to knowledge and understanding.

It would appear that the Volunteers found the Columbia training program increased their knowledge and understanding in all 14 areas. In general, the contributions were rated between "some" and "considerable". (Although the mean ratings for the 14 items range from 3.1 to 4, the majority cluster between 3.5 and 4.)

For ease of analysis, the 14 items have been grouped under five headings: agency, the poor and poverty community, social action, awareness of self and others, and VISTA identity. The level of training contribution is fairly similar for the items under each heading and for the 14 items as a whole, but some slight variations can be noted.

From the relatively higher ratings accorded the items listed under the headings "poor" and "social action" in Table 48, it would appear that training was particularly effective in these areas.

The program contributed considerably to instilling a commitment to,

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[1] The following scale was used:

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 1          2          3          4          5
 /.______ ________ ___/.___ _________________/.
very little           some                considerable
contribution      contribution            contribution
```

TABLE 48 -- Extent to which the Columbia Training Program Contributed to the Knowledge and Understanding of the VISTA Volunteers

Items	Volunteer Rating Mean	 S.D.
Agency		
Understanding of how a social agency works	3.6	1.02
Ability to listen and learn from supervisor	3.4	1.26
Poor and Poverty Community		
Exposure to needs and characteristics of poor	3.8	1.03
Understanding of complexity of urban society	3.8	1.04
Understanding of what it means to be poor	3.5	1.23
Knowledge of workings of community and decision making process	3.1	1.08
Social Action		
Knowledge of various views with respect to helping the poor	4.0	1.04
Desire to get involved insocial action	3.8	1.17
Awareness of Self and Others		
Awareness of middle-class point of view and prejudices	3.7	1.33
Awareness of strengths and weaknesses	3.5	1.23
Ability to live and work with different people	3.4	1.23
Ability to tolerate views of others	3.4	1.23
VISTA Identity		
Commitment to VISTA	3.6	1.21
Realization of possible lim ts of VISTA role	3.5	1.23

and knowledge about, social action and alternate solutions to the problems of poverty. Many Volunteers undoubtedly came predisposed to such a commitment, but all training cycles included exciting discussions on social action and proponents of various points of view as speakers. This emphasis was in line with the training staff's understanding that the urban VISTAS were being trained for community action roles. (As noted previously, this often was not the case.)

The needs and characteristics of the poor and the complexities of urban life also, apparently, were comprehensively covered.

Although the Columbia trained Volunteers in the field, according to Supervisors and other VISTA Volunteers, evidenced strong attachments to the Columbia training program and staff, they also seemed to absorb a considerable VISTA identity and commitment during training. In addition, training apparently made a contribution towards a clarification of the middle-class point of view shared by most trainees and how this point of view might differ from and even prejudice them against the clients with whom they would work.

One item among the 14 was slightly less highly rated: "knowledge and workings of the community and the decision-making process." A review of training notes indicates that little attention was paid to this topic in Columbia training.

Type of Learning Opportunities Most Desired by Volunteers and Supervisors

The Volunteers

The Columbia Training Program attempted to balance a series of discrete training components considered essential to the VISTA role. Included were: attitudes about people, the helping role and use of self in a helping way; information on needs and characteristics of urban poor; a delineation of the role of the agency in providing services; some elementary program skills, a sense of identification with VISTA; an increased awareness of self; and sufficient support to make training a positive learning experience.

It is obviously difficult to incorporate all of the above in six weeks, and constant alterations in the balance between various components took place.[1] Despite such shifts, certain broad categories of learning remained constant throughout. For purposes of training evaluation these can be isolated and described as follows:

> _The poor: characteristics and needs_--provided in theoretical discussions on poverty and theories of social change, and in face-to-face confrontation with the poor in field work.
>
> _The agency, job and community_--presented experientially through field work and visits to community agencies, and didactically through sessions on skills and community resources.
>
> _VISTA life_--illustrated through meeting with VISTAS already in the field, talks by VISTA Washington staff and opportunities for Volunteers to get to know each other as future VISTA Volunteers.

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[1] These will be discussed and evaluated in a subsequent report.

> Integrative and supportive learnings--in which the various pieces were put together in discussion groups, informal talks with staff and bull sessions with other trainees. Throughout,a surrogate parent role was assumed by mature and giving adults.

After four months on the job the Volunteers were asked to reflect on the various components of the training program at Columbia and assess the time allotted to each.

Given a series of 12 items, Volunteers indicated whether they would suggest devoting more time, less time or the same amount of time to each item in future training programs. The items and the responses of the Volunteers are shown in Table 49. In this table the 12 components are grouped under five broad categories of learning which consistently formed the basic content of the five training cycles.

In the case of six items, half or more of the Volunteers were satisfied with the amount of time allotted (items identified by a single asterisk). In the other six items a change was suggested. More time was favored for five of the six items by a majority of those advocating change (double asterisked items). With respect to the sixth item (presentation of theories of social change), opinions were about evenly divided between more and less time.

TABLE 49 -- Time Allotment as Desired by Volunteers

(N=111)

TYPE OF LEARNING	Amount of Time in Future Programs Respondents Desiring Same	 More	 Less	 No Answer
A. The Poor	%	%	%	%
*Sessions on characteristics and needs of poor	52.3	29.7	18.0	-
Presentation of social theories on how to help poor.	42.4	29.7	27.9	-
B. The Job, Agency, Community				
**Sessions on Skills	23.4	66.7	9.0	.9
**Field Work	44.1	46.9	9.0	-
**Visits to community agencies	45.1	41.4	13.5	-
**Sessions on community resources	39.7	36.0	23.4	.9
C. VISTA Life				
*Opportunities to socialize with other trainees	77.5	4.5	18.0	-
*Talks by VISTA Washington staff	51.4	11.7	35.1	1.8
**Meetings with other VISTA Volunteers already in field	24.3	53.2	22.5	-
D. Integrative and Supportive Learning				
*Discussion groups	58.6	18.9	21.6	.9
*Informal time with training staff	50.5	36.9	10.8	1.8
*Bull sessions with other trainees	68.5	11.7	19.8	-

*Same amount of time favored by half or more of the Volunteers.
**More time advocated by a majority of those desiring change.

An inspection of Table 49 indicates that there are six items which a sizeable group of Volunteers (one-third ore more) feels warrant greater attention in future training programs. These items and the proportion of respondents desiring more time are:

	Respondents %
Sessions on Skills	66.7
Meetings with VISTA Volunteers already in field	53.2
Field Work	46.9
Visits to community agencies	41.4
Informal time with staff	36.9
Sessions on community resources	36.0

Four of the program components pertain directly to carrying out the VISTA job (i.e., "sessions on skills," "community resources," "visits to community agencies" and "field work"). The fifth item, "meetings with VISTAS already in the field," also offers trainees a chance to obtain more information about agency and job. But, in addition, talking with other VISTAS provides opportunities to learn more about the "real life" of a VISTA, including housing, getting along on the VISTA allowance, social life, restrictions on action as a VISTA, etc.

The desire for more informal time with the training staff would appear to stem from the popularity of the Columbia training staff, and from the continued need for support and sustenance during the complex process of becoming a VISTA Volunteer.

It is interesting to note that Volunteers felt enough time was devoted to sessions on poverty, including characteristics of the poor and theories for alleviating poverty. It should not be assumed that poverty and its elimination was not a topic of deep concern to the trainees. Rather, most trainees had just come from the universities and felt there was a limit to how much one could theorize about poverty.

It was the prevailing point of view among trainees that the best way to learn was through experience; hence the continued popularity of field work among the Volunteers of each cycle. This attitude was shared to a considerable extent by the training staff. As the training program progressed, field work of a more intense nature was provided, which included opportunity for greater direct contact with the poor.

It is interesting to note that the proportion of requests for expanded field work diminishes gradually over the year. In Columbia III and IV combined, where the time allotted to the didactic learnings equalled field work time, a total of 50% of the group wanted more field work; in Columbia V and VI combined, where field work was increased in importance, the proportion dropped to 48%, while by Columbia VII, with field work as the central core, the proportion dropped to 39%. However, while the proportions gradually dropped, even at the lowest point, almost 40% of the Volunteers felt that more extended field work would prove beneficial in future training.

In evaluating the type of learning experience most suitable to training VISTA Volunteers, an approximation to reality seems most important. As we see training experiences which bring Volunteers closest to the real life of a VISTA Volunteer are in greatest demand. More training time is requested for field work (where Volunteers learn by doing), meetings with VISTAS already in the field (where the trainee can get the "real story" of the difficulties and problems), sessions on skills (which help prepare the Volunteers more adequately for the job), and visits to community agencies (which enable the Volunteer to get a first-hand picture of what the social welfare field looks like). There is an understandable desire on the part of trainees, during training, to experience and learn as much as possible about what is in store for them. But the Volunteers, after being in the field for four months, endorse such learning opportunities as the most effective way of ensuring a fast adjustment to VISTA field life.

According to the Volunteers, the fewer the unknowns, the shorter the break-in period and the more service that can be given in the twelve months with VISTA.

It should be noted, however, that coupled with the suggestion for more experiential learning is the request for more time with training staff in informal social and supportive sessions. This, of course, is the other side of young Volunteers moving out into an adult world. In training they appear to welcome, and in fact seek out, close contacts with mature helping adults who serve as role models during the initial transition to poverty and VISTA. We have noted that in the field, Supervisors often are called upon to play this role. During initial training, the first break with the past, this need for support and sustenance is probably even more acute.

The Supervisors

Supervisors share the Volunteers' desire for practice-oriented training. The following question was put to them: "Were there some aspects of training that you feel were overlooked, or not handled adequately? Are there certain parts which should be emphasized or enlarged upon in the future?

Sixty-four of the seventy-five Supervisors interviewed reported that some things were overlooked, and offered one or more suggestions about items to be added, stressed or emphasized in future training. Their suggestions are summarized in the following table according to type of learning requiring more attention.

TABLE - 50 - Supervisor's Suggestions on What More Should be Emphasized in the Training of VISTA Volunteers

Type of Learning	Number of Mentions	Proportion of Mentions*
A- Preparation for Specific Agency and Job including advance information on particular agencies (programs, structure, workings); information on city or area in which agencies operate, and training in skills relevant to potential job assignments.	58	90.6%
B- Ability to Work Within Agency Framework including respect for agency, purpose, policies, goals, acceptance of structure, channels, procedures, willingness to work under supervision and flexibility in accepting job assignment.	32	50.0%
C- Need for Greater Job Skills including how to deal with people, find and use community resources, work with variety of people, pick up on a started project (those comments referred to skills in general sense, not related specifically to any particular agency as in Section A.)	18	28.1%
D- The Culture of Poverty including greater knowledge of people, social problems, stress positive as well as negative aspects of the poor.	17	26.6%

Type of Learning	Number of Mentions	Proportion of Mentions*
E- Realistic Concepts About Social Change including a realistic picture of time change takes, what change is (small steps, mundane things, etc.), social change involves hard work not glamour, sense of timing and knowhow on when to intervene.	13	20.3%
F- Personal Preparation of Volunteers including standards of behavior, morality, dress, caution against overinvolvement, need for initiative, imagination, self-starting.	13	20.3%

Total number of mentions	151
Total number of Supervisors commenting	64
Average number of mentions per Supervisor	2.4

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*Adds up to more than 100% since respondents made more than one mention

In studying the suggestions made by the Direct Supervisors on ways of strengthening training, we find echoes of the Volunteers' requests for training more specifically geared to jobs and reality. The largest number of mentions concerned better preparation for specific jobs and specific agencies. As has been noted previously, Columbia trainers were not informed about the particular agencies and jobs awaiting Volunteers until the conclusion of the Selection Board. In addition, they had limited contact with VISTA sponsors outside New York. A further complicating factor was the time period during which Columbia training occurred (September 1965-November 1966). The agency picture was in flux and it was difficult to define VISTA jobs and placements.

For these reasons, Volunteers received only a cursory introduction to their agencies at the end of the Selection Procedure.[1] It is therefore not surprising that sponsors found Volunteers ill-informed about their particular agency and its programs. As noted, agency training programs upon arrival did not exist for 30% to 40% of the Volunteers. Thus, a sizeable group of Volunteers experienced a more difficult adjustment period than necessary. By the end of the four months, any absence of knowledge was of course remedied by the realities of life and the job.

The Supervisors' second area of concern was adjustment to the agency. Although acquaintance with and acceptance of the agency was stressed at Columbia, more apparently could have been done in this connection.[2] One wonders, however, how much adjustment to agency and structure adolescents and young adults can absorb in six weeks (particularly when they are also involved in the culture shock of a rapid introduction to urban poverty).

Expanded field work, as suggested by the Volunteers, probably would help make for greater adjustment to the agency. However, training staffs must find some balance between the desire on the part of the agencies for compliant, adjustable workers and the needs of VISTA for action-oriented, challenging young people. Certainly, urban VISTAS who cannot adjust to the agency life cannot function effectively as Volunteers. But too easy and rapid an adjustment may not be the answer. Considering the interest shown by Supervisors and Volunteers alike, in the question of appropriate adjustment to the agency, this topic appears to warrant further consideration.

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[1] Volunteers going to a particular agency were gathered together and a description of the agency was read from the placement book. Only rarely was there anyone around who had been to the agency who could answer any specific questions. In one training cycle, a Sponsors' conference was held at the end of training, but this practice was discontinued at Washington's request.

[2] It should be noted that throughout the report there are comments by Supervisors about adjustment to agency. When one examines the number of Supervisors commenting or the number of Volunteers being talked about we find that only about 20- 30 Volunteers are involved. Thus apparently about three-quarters of the Columbia Volunteers successfully adjusted to agency, while up to one-quarter had some difficulty in the area. However, one-quarter is enough to give weight to adjustment to agency as an area of concern.

Closely tied up with the question of acceptance of agency is the definition of social change agent. As noted, many Volunteers join VISTA with social change in mind and the Columbia training program helped Volunteers explore avenues of social action and theories of change. It is important to note that, by and large, Supervisors and Agency Sponsors expressed no strong objection to VISTA Volunteers as social change agents (interpreted loosely, however). But as experienced professionals, they cautioned against unrealistic expectations of the change possible during one year of service. Volunteers also were haunted by whether or not they were really making an impact. Both groups agree that questions of shortness of time, smallness of steps, how change is effected and what constitutes social change need fullest exploration in training.

The remaining items noted--more generic job skills, more exposure to poverty and stress on standards of behavior and morality for Volunteers--seem self-explanatory. Most training programs address themselves to these points. As with all other aspects of training, however, the actual key is the proper balance among various learning components. No matter what is attempted, it is likely that six weeks never will be enough time for untrained young Volunteers to learn all they should know. Considerable learning must, and appears to take place on the job.

Training Administration

In addition to outlining areas of content that need further enlargement in the training program, some Sponsors raised questions pertaining to the administration of training and to the selection of Volunteers. The following points with respect to administration of training and selection were made by 22 Direct Supervisors. There is a need for:

--Closer contact between trainers and Sponsors, including advance information about training and about the characteristics of the Volunteers and how best to use them.

--Better recruitment prior to training, better screening during training and assignment of Volunteers based upon background, experience and Volunteer wishes.

How Realistically was Picture of VISTA Presented During Training?

Ways in Which Things Turned Out Differently for Volunteers

During training, attempts were made do paint a realistic picture of the life of a VISTA Volunteer in urban poverty. As note', the training staff was hampered in this effort by their limited contact with Sponsoring Agencies and VISTA Volunteers already in the field, and by a constant shifting in the field picture. To increase the sense of reality in later cycles (Columbia VI and VII), VISTA Volunteers stationed in the New York City area were invited to meet the trainees and talk "off the cuff" with them about the problems faced. In addition, as reports from the visits of the Research Staff to Sponsoring Agencies became available, they were fed into the training program.

A gap, however, continued to exist between what "would be" and what "is" although the space was narrowed as the year progressed. Some exploration of potential areas of discrepancy was hypothesized to be of value to those responsible for VISTA training. As a result, all Volunteers in the sample were asked the extent to which the "real life" of a VISTA Volunteer as they experienced it coincided with their end-of-training expectations.[1]

Slightly more than one-third of the group reported that life as a VISTA turned out pretty much as they expected. Almost half felt that, to some extent, things turned out as expected but that there were some significant differences, while 14% said that things turned out almost entirely different than expected. The gap between training expectations and VISTA reality was narrowest in the case of Columbia VI and VII.

In what areas did the major discrepancies between expectations and reality occur? As perceived by Volunteers at the end of four months, the six major areas were (in rank order): job assignment, the agency and relationships with Supervisors, relationships with clients, dimensions of poverty, placements, and living conditions.[2]

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[1] Although the recall method used in this question has definite limitations, the answers revealed interesting material that was borne out by response to other questions.

[2] Areas considered major were noted by nine or more Volunteers. A scattering of comments was also made on the lack of support from VISTA Washington, lack of contact with other Volunteers and unexpected findings about personal adequacy. These items are covered elsewhere in the report in response to other questions.

Sixty-four Volunteers (59% of the total group) offered explanations of the differences they found between their end-of-training expectations and reality. The tone of the comments made was both positive (i.e., things turned out better than expected) and negative (worse than expected) as well as neutral (merely different than expected). The areas and number of favorable, unfavorable and neutral comments are shown below:

TABLE 51 -- Areas in Which Discrepancies Occurred Between Training Expectations and VISTA Reality as Perceived by Volunteers

Expectations Differed from Reality With Respect to:	Total Number of Mentions	Nature of Mentions		
		Positive	Negative	Neutral
Job Assignment	31	7	24	--
Agency and Supervisor	30	18	12	--
Relationship with Clients	14	4	7	3
Poverty and Effects of War on Poverty	11	1	10	--
Placement	13	--	9	4
Living Conditions	11	6	3	2
Total	110*	36	65	9

*Some Volunteers made more than one comment so total mentions are greater than the 64 respondents commenting. In the following section the comments of the Volunteers will be summarized. For more details on the way reality differed from expectations, see Appendix V.

As can be seen in Table 51, things turned out worse twice as often as they turned out better. The differences between expectations and reality covered almost all aspects of VISTA. Notable for their absence are comments relating to VISTA Washington and the Volunteers' own abilities to do the job at hand. From conversations with Volunteers and responses to other questions, it would appear that there was considerable dissatisfaction with the help available from Washington. But apparently, lack of support from VISTA Washington did not come as much of a surprise to most Volunteers. (See Chapter VIII).

By far, the largest number of unrealized expectations occurred with respect to job assignments and conceptions of poverty.

In studying the comments on disappointments in job assignments we find that two dominant themes occur: jobs involved service rather than community organization and community action, and the Volunteers found themselves less involved in their VISTA jobs than they anticipated. It is interesting to note that the approximate number of Volunteers commenting that their jobs and/or agency placements were different and less rewarding than anticipated (24 Volunteers) parallels the number of Volunteers previously expressing dissatisfaction with the work they were given to date and the number mentioning a desire for a different job. Apparently in all these questions we are dealing with a small but significant minority of from 20 to 25 Volunteers (although they are not always the same individuals in each question). Again it should be remembered that training, particularly in the early cycles, stressed community action. Service jobs were generally underplayed and unintentionally undervalued.

The comments with respect to poverty indicate, to some extent, the degree of culture shock involved in coming from the middle-class white America to the Negro ghetto. No matter what is done in training, the reality of life in the ghetto is bound to come as a shock to some Volunteers. It is surprising that only 10 Volunteers report they found poverty conditions worse than they expected (poverty more enveloping, the problems more involved, etc.). However, in training, Volunteers were exposed to some of the worst slums in New York City and much of what they found in the field may not have come as a surprise.

Tied in with the tendency to underestimate the immensity of poverty was the finding that at least another seven Volunteers underestimated the difficulty of establishing relationships with clients and becoming part of the community. Again, considering that the Volunteers were in the neighborhood for only four months, it is likely that more Volunteers must have experienced incomplete acceptance by clients. However, considerable stress was made in training on the slow pace of acceptance, which may account for the relatively small expression of a gap between expectation and reality in this area.

With respect to agency and living conditions, more Volunteers were pleasantly surprised than disappointed. Volunteers were pleased to find that they enjoyed more independence than they anticipated; the agency was less structured, more progressive; and that they were treated better, more like professionals than they had been led to expect. (A total of 18 of the 39 comments on Agency and Supervisor were in a positive vein). A few, however, found agency life worse than anticipated, particularly noting agency red tape and bureaucracy, the excessive need to be part of the agency and some hostility on the part of the staff. It appears likely that somewhat more disappointment with agency life existed than was expressed. We have noted that in other questions as many as 25 Volunteers raised questions about job and/or agency. It should be observed, however, that the Columbia Training Program made a special point of discussing the role of the agency with the Volunteers and warning them from the beginning that they would be expected to function within an agency framework. The fact that only a few Volunteers found their agencies more restricting than anticipated probably is partly a reflection of training in this area.

Supervisory Reaction to Volunteer Conception of VISTA Role

Further evidence of the degree to which the Columbia Training program realistically prepared the Volunteers was obtained from the Direct Supervisors. Each Supervisor was asked to evaluate how realistic a picture the Volunteer had of the role of a VISTA upon arrival.

According to the Supervisors, one-third of the Volunteers had a fairly realistic picture of the VISTA role when they arrived. Roughly another third were realistic in some areas and unrealistic in others, while the final 32 people were considered to have little concept of what was expected of them as VISTA Volunteers. (Future reports will relate these evaluations to type of Agency and fieldwork placement of Volunteer during training).

The principal areas of confusion in role conception, noted by the Supervisors, mirror their responses to questions on what more needs to be added to or expanded in training. Most frequently noted was confusion with respect to agency (i.e., the Volunteer had little concept of his relationship to agency or of the nature of an agency or the fact that he wouldn't be working on his own).

He did not appreciate the need for Supervision or the importance of fitting into a picture already set before the Volunteer arrived.

Again it should be noted that confusion about agency was not widespread but was symptomatic of about one-quarter of the Volunteers.

A second area of confusion stems from the previously noted lack of clarity about what the Volunteers were being trained for. VISTA Washington spoke in general of community organization but it was not until halfway through the year that the staff realized how many Volunteers would be going into service jobs. Supervisors therefore found that some Volunteers did not expect to be assigned to the type of agency or job in which they were finally placed. Most striking in this respect were the Columbia III Volunteers who were placed in the Board of Education of a large Midwestern City, or other Volunteers sent to Bail Bond projects or highly structured teaching assignments in a Job Training Program.

A few Supervisors also mentioned confusion about the nature of poor people, and urged that training stress their positive features as well as the negative.

Some Concepts Supervisors Consider Essential for Inclusion in Training

It would appear from the responses of the Supervisors to training-oriented questions that there are certain key concepts which Supervisors consider essential in VISTA training. To begin with, they call for a clear presentation of the role of agency and the relationship of the Volunteer to the Sponsoring Agency (including acceptance of structure and supervision, the need for job flexibility, a sense of responsibility towards agency and a degree of Volunteer initiative). Of almost equal importance is some introduction to specific job and specific skills as related to specific agencies. Supervisors apparently have not given much thought to questions of the generic nature of the helping role and are more concerned that the Volunteers bring the very skills they need for the job at hand. There is recognition of the need for an introduction to the culture of poverty and to realistic discussions of social change and what the Volunteer can expect to do as a change agent. Training also should instill in the Volunteer, according to the Supervisor, proper standards of behavior and morality and a sense of the impact of Volunteer behavior on the position of the agency in the community.

Supervisors are rarely concerned with insuring that training encompass a sense of the essential nature of VISTA and its special function in the War on Poverty. Too often Supervisors tend to see training as primarily a reconditioning of young people to fit into the agency mold. They appear to be less concerned with the potential growth and development experience for the young Volunteer and his possible contributions to the agency itself.

Considering the role definition of Supervisors it is understandable that their concerns are mainly agency and job-oriented. But it raises a serious question about whether agency Supervisors can appropriately be responsible for the type of developmental training VISTA Volunteers need as they move from a sheltered, one-class environment into the typical turbulent and violent urban ghettos. In many cases, the kind of broad, theoretical knowledge necessary to understand the causation of poverty is not within the immediate frame of reference of practice oriented agency staff. Certainly supervisory concerns about the agency and specific skills that are expressed in the foregoing pages are relevant to effective VISTA training, but are they the whole picture?

Should Training be Done by VISTA Nationally or Left to Individual Sponsors in the Agencies?

In spite of any reservations about Columbia training or any suggestions for future emphasis in training, Supervisors and Volunteers were overwhelmingly in favor of advance training, under VISTA auspices, prior to sending Volunteers to various sponsoring agencies.

The following question was asked of both groups:

> Do you think it is worthwhile to put all VISTAS through several weeks of training prior to coming to their sponsoring agencies or would it be better to give them a one or two-day orientation about VISTA and send them to their permanent agencies for training?

The responses are as follows:

	Supervisors		Volunteers	
	No.	%	No.	%
Give prior training	52	69.3	89	80.2
Send directly to Agency	14	18.7	13	11.7
It Depends	7	9.3	7	6.3
No Answer	2	2.7	2	1.8
TOTAL	75	100.0	111	100.0

It is apparent that both Volunteers and Supervisors support the idea of a separate training program conducted under VISTA auspices prior to agency assignment. Both groups give many reasons in support of their responses. Volunteers tend to note more reasons per individual than Supervisors, but the nature of the responses of the two groups is remarkably similar. Training is seen, most significantly perhaps, as a transition period between the old life of the Volunteer and the new life of the VISTA, between middle class America and the world of poverty. It is an opportunity to gradually absorb the culture shock of moving from a small intimate community to the big, impersonal city; from white neighborhoods to Negro ghettos; from exposure to one type of person to exposure to many types of people. That this movement takes place in a supportive atmosphere is particularly appreciated by the Volunteers who say that training gives them an opportunity to get a sense of confidence, and a sense of comaraderie in lieu of homes, families and college friends.

Another crucial benefit of training, to both Volunteers and Supervisors, is it offers a basic introduction and conditioning for the world of work (in the case of most Volunteers it is their first full-time job). In training, Volunteers learn about the poor, social agencies and some rudimentary job skills and work attitudes. They get a more realistic perspective on social action both from process and time points of view. Although it is recognized that specific job training could be done in the agencies, there is a reluctance to assign even this aspect of training to Sponsors. Agencies are seen by both groups as being too involved, too busy to take time to do the necessary job. Supervisors note too that training is a full-time job.

Volunteers question whether any agency could give the overall VISTA picture--the common approach that makes all Volunteers members of VISTA, regardless of the agency or job to which they are assigned. This feeling of commitment to and identification with VISTA as a national movement begins during training and is seen as a very important sustaining factor to the Volunteers in the field. Most Volunteers feel that agency training would result in fragmentation of the VISTA image. "Training develops," said one Volunteer, "a sense of unity and commitment which makes us VISTA Volunteers." (As can be expected, the importance of VISTA training as a philosophical groundwork and unifying force is more frequently noted by the Volunteers than by the Supervisors.)

The final aspect of VISTA training stressed more by Volunteers, although recognized by Supervisors, is the opportunity for the trainees to take stock of themselves and of VISTA. Attitudes and prejudices are explored, capabilities discerned and a testing ground provided for the discovery of personal motivations and fitness for the VISTA job. Threading through all Volunteer and Supervisory comments is the recognition of the need for a supportive period of gradual transition and acculturation to the world of job and the ghetto of poverty.

It is interesting to note that although Volunteers and Supervisors questioned the lack of specificity in the Columbia VISTA training, it is the very generic nature of VISTA training that is seen as its raison d'être.

Some Implications about VISTA Training

The purpose of evaluating the Columbia Training Program is not to record its effectiveness, but rather to garner from the experience some findings which may have value for future VISTA training. A study of the implications of the performance ratings of the Columbia trained Volunteers and the responses of the Volunteers and Supervisors to the several questions on training provides a picture of the possibilities and limitations of a six-week initial VISTA training course.

It would appear that VISTA training should, at its best, provide the Volunteer with the following learnings essential to high level performance as a VISTA Volunteer.

1. An introduction to poverty and the poor.-

   Such an introduction should at least minimally prepare the Volunteer for living and working in a poverty environment so at variance with his accustomed way of life. The Volunteer needs to know, first hand, a depressed neighborhood, and become acquainted with poor people, learn how to reach out and establish relationships with low income, and minority groups and how to listen sensitively and empathetically to their problems and needs.

2. An introduction to agency.-

   Included in such an introduction should be the history and purpose of social welfare and education agencies, their role in alleviating poverty, something about typical agency structure and broad functions. In carefully selected field work, the Volunteer should be exposed to the realities of supervision, to the type of people who typically supervise and to positive relationships possible with Supervisors. Trainees also need to learn about appropriate channels with an agency as well as inter-agency relationships.

3. A beginning introduction to the concept of community.-

Volunteers need to become familiar with what a community is, the principal community resources and how to locate them, the operation of the power structure and how it can be effectively influenced by the poor.

4. An understanding of the VISTA role with its many facets and complexities.-

Most trainees come to VISTA with a vague idea of the meaning of helping others. In training, as the Volunteers become involved in field work and listen to experts from various disciplines the helping role begins to take shape. Hopefully training will present the Volunteer with a broad interpretation of the helping role, giving equal weight to both the social power and the social competence model of intervention. The role of the Volunteer as innovator and gadfly within an agency also needs exploration. An enlarged and clarified concept of helping and the VISTA role will enable the Volunteer to more easily accept varying kinds of assignments and the slow pace of change.

5. An identification with VISTA and a commitment to the VISTA purpose and specialness.-

Training should give the Volunteer a sense of belonging to a movement larger than any individual or agency. Hopefully the gestalt of VISTA will fall into place and the Volunteer will leave training with a sense of purpose and enthusiasm which will sustain him in the difficult adjustment period ahead. VISTA identity involves exposure to members of the VISTA national and regional staff as well as VISTA Volunteers already in the field. Trainees should also be made aware of whom to turn to in times of need. A Vista Volunteer is more than additional manpower for an agency and the Volunteer must absorb a strong dose of VISTA identity for this to continue to be the case.

A crucial aspect of VISTA requiring special attention in training is the concept of living in the neighborhood. Trainees need to become aware that much of the special effectiveness of VISTA is dependent upon Volunteers living among the poor and the opportunities for service which arise through informal contacts with clients and neighbors.

6. A developing sense of personal confidence.-

The life of a VISTA Volunteer is often difficult and changing. In the supportive atmosphere of training, Volunteers should be encouraged to face new challenges and test out their abilities and personal strengths. The resulting sense of confidence will enable them to more easily adjust to a VISTA assignment. Above all training should expose Volunteers to the adult world and allow them to discover their place in it and the positive contributions they can make.

7. Increased self-understanding and sensitivity towards others.-

Living and working in training with a variety of people should help to broaden perspectives, make the potential Volunteer aware of his feelings and prejudices, and how others react to him. This beginning self-knowledge will enable the Volunteer to emerge from adolescent self-absorption to a fuller awareness of the world around him and will be an important step towards adult maturity. Naturally six weeks can offer only a beginning in sensitivity training, but hopefully skilled Supervisors will pick up where training leaves off. As with self-confidence, continued growth is possible in the agency setting once a solid foundation is laid.

8. An introduction to some of the broad generic skills involved in carrying out a job in an agency setting.

This involves the definition of a group of basic tasks and ways of work involved in most helping jobs (i.e., going into a slum building and making contact, talking with a client and discovering needs, gathering facts and making a suitable plan of action organizing work schedules, etc.). In field work, Volunteers should receive an exposure to as many of these generic skills as is consistent with the time limitations of the training course. Potential Volunteers would, thus, be introduced to many aspects of the helping role but would not be exclusively trained for any one type of agency, or specific job.

Specific skill training related directly to future job assignment has purposely been omitted from the above list of crucial learnings. Not because such skills are not essential to both adequate performance and the Volunteers' own sense of confidence.

Our findings indicate, however, that six weeks of VISTA training can only hope to give an introduction to program skills and that depth learning in this important area should and does take place primarily on the job. Once Volunteers have become acclimated to the world of poverty, have a sense of proportion about its problems and solutions, are aware of the various facets of the VISTA helping role, have been able to meet and make contact with clients, are familiar with agency and supervision, have realistic confidence in their own abilities and been introduced to certain basic patterns of work--they will be able to quickly absorb specific job skills as they perform their VISTA assignments.

The Columbia trained Volunteers were least well prepared with respect to specific skills germane to specific agencies and jobs. As we have seen, the training staff had no advance knowledge of where the Volunteers were going and coordination between placement training was poor. Yet within a three to four month period, most Volunteers in our study were able to absorb the required skills on their jobs and perform at a relatively high level (according to Supervisors most familiar with their work).

It appears, however, that Columbia provided the Volunteers with the essential foundation upon which to build specific job learnings. This foundation included, we know, an ability to move into the neighborhood and make contacts with the poor, a willingness to adapt to agency and accept its role, some basic work habits, relational fluency and a deep commitment to VISTA, their clients and their jobs.

One final ingredient of training, present at Columbia, should not be overlooked; the need for a close relationship between trainees and the training staff. It is important that trainees feel that the training staff appreciates and has faith in the potential of the young Volunteers. The care, concern and support of the Columbia staff was a source of strength to the Volunteers throughout the VISTA year and a reminder of what helping people can be like. Staff members continued to serve as role models "in absentia" and Volunteers expressed over and over the desire to perform at a level commensurate with the expectations of the training staff.

It would appear that appropriate VISTA training requires a special blend of cognitive and attitudinal learning combined with a strong dose of ego strengthening. Given such a foundation, young middle class Volunteers can successfully face the rigors of life in the poverty ghettos.

Initial training as outlined above is seen as the first step in an on-going process of continual learning for the VISTA Volunteers throughout their period of service. General introduction during initial training to poverty, agency, helping role, followed by more specific skill training on the job is only part of the total picture. Most of the Volunteers interviewed had not yet attended VISTA regional meetings, so that reactions to this important next training step were not available. It would appear, however, that after three to four months on the job, Volunteers, are in a position to absorb subtitles of job, agency interaction and the potentials for social action, that are overlooked in the initial introductory phase. At this point, re-exploration of such topics should not only increase Volunteer job effectiveness, but strengthen their will and determination to make the most of their years of VISTA service.

CHAPTER IX

VISTA at the End of Four Months

How it Looks to the Volunteers

Introduction

In the main body of our study we concentrated on the agency, the job, the life of the Volunteer in the neighborhood and VISTA training. There still remains, however, relationships with VISTA nationally and some evaluation by the Volunteers of the impact of the VISTA experience on the client, the agency and on themselves. At the close of the interviews, the scope of the questioning was broadened to include these subjects.

Impact is, of course, difficult to measure and time is an important factor. The following comments reflect Volunteer feelings at the four-month point. At the end of the year of service, Volunteers had more to say about the total impact of their experiences; such findings will be discussed in a future report.

Assistance to Volunteers in Carrying Out VISTA Functions

As has been noted frequently, it is not easy to be a VISTA Volunteer in urban poverty. With relatively little training, Volunteers are sent to unknown cities, a strange agency and a new job. In addition they are expected to live and cope with America's most problematic areas--the poverty ghettos of our largest cities. There are few persons available to welcome and support the incoming Volunteer and at least in the beginning clients and neighbors may be apathetic or even hostile. All of this is in sharp contrast to the relatively affluent protected environments from which the Volunteers come.

What sustains VISTA Volunteers during the difficult adjustment of the first few months and during the long pull of the year of service? Are there certain groups more helpful than others in offering needed sustenance and assistance? The Volunteers in this study were asked to rate how helpful the following had been to them in carrying out the functions of a VISTA Volunteer; the items are listed in decreasing order of helpfulness as rated by the 111 Volunteers:

TABLE - 52 - Sources of Help as a VISTA Volunteer

	Percent of Volunteers Responding			
Sources of Help	Very Helpful	Somewhat	Not too Helpful	N.A.
Volunteer's own convictions and enthusiasm	69.4	27.9	1.8	.9
Volunteer's past experience	50.5	38.7	9.9	.9
Immediate supervisor	49.5	32.5	17.1	.9
Training	37.9	47.7	13.5	.9
Friends on agency staff	31.5	42.4	22.5	3.6
Other VISTAS	28.0	48.6	22.5	.9
Members of the Columbia training staff	27.9	41.5	29.7	.9
The sponsoring agency	24.3	43.3	20.6	1.8
Representatives from VISTA Washington	9.0	27.0	64.0	-

The essential aloneness of the VISTA Volunteer is illustrated in the preceding table. When the Volunteer leaves training and goes on the job, it is his own personal convictions and past experience which provide the greatest sustenance. Practically every Volunteer relied, at least in the first instance, on personal strengths rather than outside forces.

Next in importance was the immediate Supervisor. This Supervisor in many cases serves as a surrogate parent and the source of assistance in any problem, job or personal. In our study most Supervisors were young and many were willing to extend themselves. Thus, 50% of the Volunteers judged their Supervisors as very helpful and 32% as somewhat helpful. The fact that 18% of the Volunteers felt their Supervisors were not too helpful is consistent with the proportion of Volunteers, noted elsewhere, who expressed dissatisfaction with supervision.

None of the other sources of assistance listed were considered "very helpful" by more than one-third of the Volunteers, although half found training and other VISTAS of "some help" in carrying out the functions of a VISTA Volunteer. It may seem surprising that other Volunteers were not considered of greater help, considering the importance of the VISTA community and the closeness of the Volunteers. It is apparent that despite training, good supervision and close friends, adjustment to VISTA in the first instance is dependent upon the personal characteristics brought to the situation by the Volunteer. The relative importance of intrinsic personal strength versus extrinsic help in the form of training, supervision, friends, etc., emphasizes the crucial role of an effective selection procedure.

VISTA Washington was the only group singled out by the Volunteers as being of little or no help. Sixty-four percent of the Volunteers stated categorically that VISTA Washington was no help, while 27% said it was only of some help. Only 9% found VISTA nationally very helpful. The unusually low rating accorded VISTA Washington as a potential source of support is consistent in all five cycles. No improvement in the perception of Washington is evident as the year progressed; and the proportion of Volunteers finding VISTA representatives not too helpful varies from 56% in Columbia IV and VII, to 75% in Columbia VI.

Other Problems Faced by VISTA Volunteers

As has been noted throughout this report, VISTA Volunteers in urban poverty face serious problems of adjustment and performance. If help is to be forthcoming from VISTA Washington and Sponsors, it is necessary to pinpoint some of the more acute problem areas. Many of the open-ended questions asked in the four-month field interview were designed to probe for trouble spots. In addition a battery of statements incorporating some common complaints of VISTA Volunteers, was presented to the Volunteers for their reactions.[1] The complaints are show in Table with the mean reaction to each statement for the 111 Volunteers.[2]

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[1] Complaints about agency and job were purposely not included in this list as they are covered elsewhere.

[2] Volunteers responded by selecting the point on a 7 point scale indicating the extent of their agreement with each statement. The scale was as follows:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree						strongly disagree

Responses of less than 4 indicate agreement or a problem; responses of more than 4 indicate disagreement or no problem.

TABLE - 53 - Common Complaints Made by VISTA Volunteers.

		Reactions of Volunteers		
Rank Order	Complaints	Amount of Problem	Mean[1]	S.D.
1	My experience to date has made me somewhat disillusioned about the War on Poverty and what it can do	Some	3.95	1.09
2	VISTA Washington doesn't even seem to know we are alive	Divided between serious problem and little problem	4.17	2.09
3	I never seem to have enough money to cover my expenses		4.38	2.10
4	Sometimes I feel absolutely alone without connections to anyone or anything		4.45	2.04
5	I do not have sufficient skill to do the job that needs to be done		4.71	1.73
6	There is no one in VISTA to turn to if you have a real problem		4.98	2.04
7	The clients have been very suspicious and even hostile to me	Little or no problem	5.29	1.68
8	Differences in background and values have made relationships with neighbors hard for me		5.32	1.73
9	The fact that I am of a different race or nationality than my clients has been a problem		5.37	1.74
10	This is the wrong placement for me	No problem	5.77	1.76
11	Language has created a serious barrier between me and the people		6.04	1.51
12	I don't have the physical strength and stamina for all that is expected of me		6.23	1.24

[1] The lower the mean the more strongly the Volunteers agree with the statement - the higher the less they agree.

In looking at the reactions of the Volunteers to the 12 items contained in TABLE 53, one is struck first by the relatively high means (all more than 3.95, indicating neutrality or disagreement with the problem statements) and the many large standard deviations. Both factors need to be taken into account to understand the Volunteers' responses.

The item (#1) dealing with disillusionment with the War on Poverty received the most consistent low ratings. The Volunteers can be described as agreeing somewhat with this statement, although expressing no very strong feelings of agreement or disagreement. We can say that most Volunteers in our sample experienced some disillusionment with the War on Poverty.

The next five items (No's. 2-6), however, represent complaints about which the Volunteers do express strong feelings, but most interestingly, both agreement and disagreement. These items have standard deviations of approximately 2 and means of about 4.5, indicating a range of response from about 2.5 to 6.5. That is, the Volunteers are very much divided in their feelings about these complaints, some seeing the item as very much of a problem, others as no problem at all.

Two of the five statements (Items 2 and 6) deal with support from VISTA itself. It can be hypothesized that when some Volunteers turned to Washington for help they received assistance, while others did not receive support when it was needed.

There was also a wide range of response to the item concerning personal finances (Item 3) which can probably be understood in terms of differing abilities to adapt to the small VISTA allowance.

Perhaps the most significant problem to which there was a wide variation of response is the complaint about feelings of aloneness and lack of connection (#4). There were Volunteers who felt very cut off and alone, while others were well-integrated with agency, job and friends. As noted elsewhere, there is a serious question of sustaining support to Volunteers in the field. One could hypothesize a direct relationship between feelings of connection and satisfaction with job and agency, as well as VISTA success.

There is also a wide diversity of feeling among the Volunteers with respect to having sufficient skills to do the job. Some feel they have the necessary skills, others feel a sense of inadequacy. Preparation in skills is clearly tied up with closer coordination between training and placement and with the utilization of previously acquired skills and experience in the assignment of Volunteers.

The next three items (7-9) can be described as areas of minor or no problem to the Volunteers. (The items have standard deviations of about 1 and means of over 5, indicating a range of responses from 4 to about 7, the half of the scale signifying little or no problem). These three items deal with difficulties in forming relationships with the poor, arising from suspicion on the part of the client, differences in background and values, and differences in race or nationality. It would seem that the Volunteers felt they had only minor or no difficulty forming relationships with the poor. (This finding bears out the evaluations of the Supervisors in performance ratings.)

The last three items (10-12) presented no problem at all to the Volunteers (The means are around 6 and the standard deviations about 1.5, indicating a range of 4.5 to about 7.). It is fascinating to note the high degree of satisfaction that the Volunteers express toward their placement, another attestment to the satisfaction of most Volunteers with their agencies and jobs. Questions of language and lack of physical stamina also did not stand in the way of Volunteer functioning.

The reaction of the Volunteers to the items in this battery underscores the feeling of frustration expressed by many Volunteers with respect to Washington and the help they can expect in time of need from representatives of VISTA nationally. This finding reinforces the attitudes expressed by the Volunteers with respect to who helped them most in their efforts to function as Volunteers. As noted, Washington was considered to be of little or no help to the Volunteers, and was the only one of ten possible sources of help so singled out. The sense of aloneness expressed by many and even their seeming disenchantment with the results of the War on Poverty may be tied up with this estrangement from VISTA Washington. Whether or not Washington in reality is available is besides the point. In terms of VISTA esprit de corps, it is enough that a sizeable group of Volunteers feel that the organization to which they belong is inaccessible and unsympathetic in time of need. Too many Volunteers expressed such feelings, both during the interviews and informally, for this to be merely an attitude of chance. There was no dinumition of expressions or negativism towards support from Washington as the year progressed. Volunteers of Columbia VI and VII were just as strong in their feelings as Volunteers of Columbia III and IV.

Adequate support to thousands of Volunteers in many distant places is, of course, not an easy task. How much of such sustenance needs to come from VISTA and how much is the responsibility of Sponsors is not clear. In our samples, Volunteers felt that Supervisors gave considerable support, while VISTA Washington was usually not available when needed. With the emergence of strong VISTA Regional Offices capable of immediate field support, this picture should change.

The complaint about money, noted above, is really a somewhat different picture. Although many Volunteers indicated that on occasion they dipped into personal resources to supplement their VISTA allowance, there was little bitterness expressed about the money. In fact, living on a VISTA allowance was seen as a challenge by many and of definite value in bringing the Volunteers closer to their clients and neighbors.

Impact on the Poor

If the vast majority of Volunteers were positive about their job assignments and the opportunities they were offered to utilize their potential skills and abilities, how did they feel about the overriding purpose of their VISTA work, to help people overcome poverty? Not unexpectedly, the Volunteers were a little more sober about the difference their presence had made in the lives of the people with whom they worked. Again a seven-point scale was utilized to measure their contributions to date. The scale and the percentage distribution of reponses is shown below.

3.7	9.2	7.3	35.8	17.4	17.4	9.2
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Little			Some			Quite a Lot

Mean = 4.43

Although it is not easy to discount the results of four months of work and six weeks of training, 20% of the Volunteers felt that their presence had made little difference. Most Volunteers (53%) however, felt that their presence had made at least some difference, while 27% were of the opinion that their work had begun to make considerable difference. The mean for the group was 4.3, or slightly above the "some difference" point on the scale. There was no notable variation in the mean, training cycle to training cycle. Considering the short time on the job, the difficulties getting started, and the complexities of overcoming poverty, any higher mean ratings would be suspect.

It is interesting to compare the Volunteers' evaluation of their impact on clients with their job satisfaction. The majority of Volunteers were both satisfied with their jobs and felt they were making at least some difference in the lives of their clients. However, 20% of the Volunteers expressed dissatisfaction with their jobs; and about the same proportion of Volunteers felt that they had made a negligible impact on clients. We find throughout the study a consistent trend of dissatisfaction expressed by about 18-20% of the Volunteers.

As noted in Chapter VII on performance ratings, Supervisors evaluated the Volunteers' impact on clients on an identical seven-point scale. The ratings of the two groups compared below indicate that the Supervisors were even more positive about the difference the Volunteers had made in the lives of their clients.

Rating	Rater Supervisor	 Volunteer
Mean	4.96	4.43
S.D.	1.54	1.52
Minimal (points 1-3)	12.7	20.2
Some (point 4)	26.4	35.8
Moderate (points 5-6)	41.8	34.8
Quite a lot (point 7)	19.1	9.2

Impact on the Agency

The Volunteers feel that in addition to having an impact on clients, they have had some effect on the agencies for whom they work. Most Volunteers (87%) responded that it would make a difference if they and other VISTAS were not in the agency. This difference is reflected in the way things get done, but most importantly in the fact that if not for the Volunteers, things would not get done at all.

Volunteers evaluate their special impact on agencies as follows:

VISTA Volunteers

....Offer extra pairs of hands--extend service by doing things that staff does not have time to do or that staff might not desire to do.

....Bring the agency closer to the community. VISTAS go out and talk with people and help agency penetrate into the area and reach more people.

....Offer a unique service or program that would not get done otherwise. (In those cases where VISTAS comprise the staff of a program or service.)

....Bring new ideas to agencies, new services needed, act as social innovators.

....Give special attention to clients, satisfy immediate needs, provide immediate help and moral support. (This is tied up with extra dedication of VISTAS and involvement in homes with clients.)

(The above items are shown in descending order of number of mentions.)

A striking example of VISTA impact on agency services occurred in a Southern city:

Three young male Volunteers work for a community organization project in a large isolated Negro section of town where services are practically non-existent. These Volunteers together with three professionals comprise the outreach team of this project. While the staff organized adults, the Volunteers worked with a group of teenagers who previously had been unreachable. The VISTAS explained that they approached the teenagers through common interests, sports and rock 'n' roll among others. The Volunteers hung around the teenage hangouts and because of their youth and informal manner were eventually able to make a contact.

At the time of the four-month visit, a teenage club had been formed with Volunteer help including a number of committees ranging from recreation to job opportunities to social reform. The club members had decided on a campaign to get the driveway of their local high school paved. With the help of the Volunteers, they wrote a petition, circulated it in the high school and obtained 2700 out of a possible 3000 signatures. The next step was a visit to the School Board with this petition. The agency reported that only the VISTA Volunteers could have gotten the teenage project underway.

Many Supervisors also bear witness to the impact the Volunteers can have on the agency. Two examples from supervisory interviews are:

In talking about an elderly Volunteer, an ex-teacher:

"Her attitude is contagious to other staff. Her willingness to

> work hard and her dependability. I find that the people working with her take on the same attitude. You should see the difference it has made in the new worker."

Or describing the impact of a young Volunteer, a recent college graduate in the Board of Education of a Midwestern city:

> "She came with an open mind. She was able to look at the broad spectrum of adult illiteracy and bring enthusiastic ideas to the whole field. Nothing stood in her way. She made dents in the approach to the recruitment of illiterate adults that have lasted. At her suggestion there are new posters in all city buses with symbolic messages on reading rather than words. Coasters were placed in local bars pictorially telling of the opportunities to learn to read offered by the Board. Then she went all over town talking with all kinds of people and laid out, step by step, a comprehensive recruitment and enrollment plan. The Board liked it so much it was referred to Washington, has been funded and will be put into effect next month."

Impact on the Volunteer

Up to this point we have been concerned with the effectiveness of the Volunteer in assisting the poor and his impact on social welfare services. Unquestionably, the primary purpose of VISTA is to help clients and neighbors break out of the cycle of poverty.

But there is another, often unmentioned beneficiary of VISTA, the young Volunteer who comes from middle-class America to live and work among the poor. The impact on this Volunteer has wide ramifications not only for the individual, but for the society to which he will return upon completion of his VISTA service. That career choices will be affected is obvious. But probably more important will be the attitudes towards and commitment to the solution of the pressing social problems of our century.

It is our hypothesis that the VISTA experience will break the boundaries of relatively insular white middle-class life and bring many of America's best young people face to face with the realities of life. From this exposure will come new understanding, compassion and commitment to the poor and minority groups and a dedication to help in the solution of their problems.

The ultimate lasting impact of VISTA may well lie in this broadened perspective and commitment.

It is too soon to definitely evaluate the impact of the VISTA experience on the Volunteers in our study but some illuminating trends are observable.

The Volunteer's View of the World and Himself

What is the impact of the VISTA experience on the Volunteer? The Volunteer has been exposed to poverty from its very heart. He has experienced the dual frustration of living in poverty and trying to alleviate it. How does this difficult and dramatic experience affect the Volunteer's view of the world and himself?

The Volunteers most frequently report that through this first-hand experience they have gained a realistic picture of poverty and its victims. They describe more than a knowledge of poverty; they project an empathy. One Volunteer said about poverty:

> "I knew these things existed, the way people are treated and the way they lived, but it was all distant to me. Now I see what it is really like and it makes my heart turn."

As another Volunteer very simply said: "Your attitude becomes more realistic. You can't understand from a distance."

One Volunteer felt for a moment that he understood the life of the poor. He said:

> "I was looking at a television commercial a few weeks ago and it hit me that it had no meaning at all. It had no relevance for me; it was completely unattainable. I could feel for a moment what a lot of these people must feel."

In addition to an understanding of poverty, the Volunteers report increased insight into the complexities of society and the power structure. The Volunteers describe an added awareness of the difficulty of alleviating social problems. These insights about the complexity of society are often difficult for the Volunteers. One said:

> "You learn the total complexity of it all, not just in terms of poverty, but in terms of everything, politics and life in general. Things are not black and white and this just becomes more and more obvious. This is probably the most depressing thing of all; foundations are shattered."

About one-quarter of the Volunteers describe feelings of disillusionment. Some are critical of the War on Poverty and what it can do, and of the Establishment. A few have lost confidence in people. Others are disillusioned with social agencies and "Welfare."

But disillusionment is not the usual Volunteer's reaction to poverty and the difficulty of social change. Most Volunteers report that their experience will make them more responsible, active citizens. One Volunteer said:

> "The experience has changed my outlook. I could never go back to the community I grew up in and look at it in the same way. I am aware of the interplay in society which deprives certain people of opportunity."

Another said:

> "VISTA has helped me develop a community awareness. Wherever I go, I will be a better citizen. I am now aware of how a city functions, what it should be like. I think VISTA has done this for many of us."

And another described her attitude in the following way:

> "I've realized that if you don't make an attempt to move things yourself, everyone else is content to let things stay as they are."

Career Choices and Increased Skills

In addition to new insights, the VISTA experience provided Volunteers with many new skills and career possibilities.

The skill most frequently learned, according to the Volunteers, was the ability to communicate with people, both clients and agency staff. This skill is at the heart of any VISTA job and was surely the one toward which there was the most pressure and in which the Volunteers received most experience.

The Volunteers also report that they absorbed the skills necessary to carry out a job in an agency setting: planning and carrying out a program, using the telephone, going through channels, using public agencies to their fullest extent, and organizing their time, among others.

Of course, the Volunteers also learned skills necessary to their specific assignments such as tutoring, organizing, court procedures, teaching, etc.

In setting up VISTA, Congress expressed the hope that the VISTA experience would lead more young people to consider careers in the helping professions. At the four-month point, Volunteers tentatively outlined their after VISTA plans and whether their service to date had influenced career thinking.

About half of the Volunteers plan to return to school after VISTA for further education. The fields of specialty most frequently mentioned (in rank order) were social work, the behavioral sciences, (psychology and sociology particularly), education and law.

Another third are thinking about getting a job; in half of the cases, the job they desire is directly related to what they are doing in VISTA (working in a community action program, teaching illiterates, working in a Head Start program, etc.)

Approximately 20% hope to reenlist in VISTA for another year.

In describing how they arrived at their projected plans, 56% of the Volunteers indicated that they were influenced by their VISTA experience; and 37% said their plans were made before coming to VISTA. (Many of these are college dropouts who left school for one year with the expressed intention of returning after VISTA.)[1]

An end-of-year questionnaire sent to all Volunteers in the sample explores questions of career choices in greater detail and will be the subject of a subsequent report.

New Types of Friends

During training and the first four months of VISTA, the Columbia Volunteers were exposed, in rapid succession, to a great variety of new people. They met and lived with young people of varied backgrounds and interests. On the job, and even more dramatically as neighbors, for the for the first time many associated with poor people and Negroes. In the agency, they met a variety of concerned professionals: social workers, teachers, etc., as well as exciting community people interested and involved in social action. Undoubtedly this experience had an immediate impact on friendship patterns, but would this impact be lasting?

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[1] 6% did not answer

Although four months is too soon to discover the lasting nature of the impact, it is time enough to chart the beginning of a possible trend. Therefore, in the four-month field interviews several questions were put to the Volunteers concerning the effect of the VISTA experience on friendship patterns.

Over two-thirds of the Volunteers in the study reported that their friends in VISTA were somewhat or very different from the people with whom they were previously friendly. The big difference was one of broader, expanded contacts; their new friends had different interests, different cultural backgrounds, and diverse religious persuasions.

When the Volunteers were asked whether they felt the broadened exposure in VISTA would continue to be felt in the kinds of friends they would seek out in the future, almost three-fourths responded that they expected their VISTA experience to have some or considerable influence. Although Volunteers did not foresee a complete change in their friendship tastes, they anticipated that they would associate more with people with interests in and strong feelings about social issues:

> "I'll seek out people who have my opinions. Because of VISTA I will have an interest in social action. I don't reject old friends; however, I will try to tell them about VISTA and the things I'm interested in...to influence them,"

said one of the Volunteers.

The second impact of the VISTA experience on future friends, according to the Volunteers, will be in heterogeneity of choice:

> "I came from a small town and have been isolated. My old friends can no longer communicate with me. I can't visualize my life in_____. But I think when I return to_______, I'll be more active in politics and social action. I will no longer take a person at face value just because they come from the same background as I do. I will have new kinds of friends, I know."

Volunteers expect to be friendly with people of more diverse social classes, races, backgrounds and political views. This expanded concept of desirable friends stems heavily from the Volunteers' contact with VISTAS from all over and with low-income clients and neighbors.

Unquestionably the Volunteers are serious about desiring future associations with the Negro and the poor. The degree to which this desire will fade upon return to middle-class America is, of course, not yet known.

However, it would appear that there is realistic basis for an assumption that the VISTA experience will continue to influence the Volunteers' perception of who are desirable people with whom to affiliate and associate. The broadened interest in people with a social point of view reflects not only the growing concern of the Volunteers with social issues but the exciting contacts they are making in VISTA with alive young people, concerned agency staff and knowledgeable and dedicated community leaders. As many Volunteers note: "Once your eyes are opened, it is hard to go back." Throughout the discussions on friendship patterns, there was a clear recognition on the part of the Volunteers that no matter what they would be doing (even staying home with children in suburbia), the impact of their contact with poverty would continue to influence their actions and reactions. It is, of course, too soon to validate this prophesy.

An Overall Evaluation of the VISTA Experience to Date

After four months in the field, the Volunteers have gone through several very difficult adjustments. They have settled in a new city, in most cases a very different type of environment than that which they had known before. They have had to adapt to an agency, to accepting a job assignment, supervision and agency rules and regulations. They have come in contact with poverty and the poor. By this point, they have had considerable contact with clients in their roles of agency worker and neighbor. In view of this range of experiences, we were very interested to find out what had given the Volunteers the greatest satisfactions and what had caused them the most frustration.

Frustrations

First a look at frustrations. Throughout this report, the frustrations of the Volunteers have been discussed. To recapitulate, in their own words, may help to put into balance the stresses and strains experienced by Volunteers in urban poverty. The major frustrations that the Volunteers reported (and almost all had at least one frustration to tell) related to job, the agency, relationships with clients, and their own personal misgivings.[1]

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[1] VISTA Washington was not included in answer to this question of major sources of frustration.

An important area of frustration for many Volunteers arose from the nature of their jobs. Coming with the preconception that a VISTA job involved going into the homes and communities and organizing for social action, many Volunteers were uneasy about being assigned to such tasks as teaching, tutoring and group work within a community center. They wondered about whether these were VISTA jobs.

Others were concerned with the fact that they did not see immediate results. The slow pace of change sometimes caused them to feel they were not accomplishing anything.

Another very upsetting feeling that some of the Volunteers described was that of not being fully utilized. One Volunteer said:

> "The staff sees us as errand boys; no responsibilities are given to us. This is not because they think we will mess it up, but because they don't know what to do with us."

Others complained that they were "not directly involved with the poor."

It should be mentioned, however, that the Volunteers did not blame only the agency for these job difficulties. They understood that some were structural in nature, that there were some inherent difficulties in "task definition," that "the project started slowly," and the "complexity of problems involved." Other problems stemmed from the Volunteers' negative reactions to their jobs: "I have to enforce rules against my will;" "I have to do things I dislike, like case work," "I have to do paper work," etc.

A few Volunteers described feelings of frustration related to the agency. They saw the agency as too structured and felt they did not have enough freedom. Some complained that their agencies were "old-fashioned" and that their goals and policies conflicted with those of VISTA.

Volunteers were bothered by the fact that other community agencies (not their own) were not doing their jobs. The Volunteers criticized Welfare and other city agencies. They complained about the lack of communication among agencies.

Occasionally the Volunteers complained about the supervision they received. The problems that the Volunteers described were more often ones of insufficient supervision than of too much supervision.

Another of the Volunteers' main sources of frustration was related to their relationship with clients, particularly when clients did not respond or were apathetic. One of the Volunteers expressed his sense of helplessness as follows:

> "We really can't reach the people who need us the most, the complete illiterates, the people who most need birth control, etc. We can't reach them even if we find them. There's so much to do, and so little time."

In some cases, too much contact with the clients was a source of frustration: "They do not leave us alone, there is no privacy." Yet a greater number of Volunteers were upset when the clients did not accept them. Acceptance was particularly important to the VISTA Volunteers who had been uprooted from familiar environments and supports. And some Volunteers also had misgivings about their own effectiveness, their lack of professional background and of skill.

In sum, the wide range of adjustments that the Volunteers were called upon to make is reflected in the many frustrations that they experienced.

Satisfactions

The Volunteers described two major types of satisfaction: those relating to job and those relating to self. The most frequently mentioned satisfactions were those relating to job (93% reported satisfactions in the job area).

The Volunteers stated that they had received satisfaction from seeing positive results as a consequence of their efforts. Some examples of this are "seeing a child learn not to be afraid of school," or "helping to obtain a driver's license," or, as one of the Volunteers in the second training cycle put it:

> "Just seeing the beginning of people starting to help themselves. And it's beginning to happen. Just knowing the seed has been planted. There's a long way to go, but I think we're going in the right direction. Just seeing these welfare women demonstrating against landlords, seeing them cleaning up their block without any help from us."

The Volunteers also received satisfaction from the positive relationships they had developed with their clients and from the acceptance of the community. Volunteers described incidents such as "having people say hello to me" or "being trusted by senior citizens," and "having positive relationships with the people of the agency." A Volunteer described her experiences:

> "The man who's coming tonight first slammed the door in my face. Now he and his children are involved in the program taking play school children on walks."

Another described the start of a relationship with a young boy:

> "Derek didn't like teachers; he wouldn't speak to them. But I have worked with him and yesterday, for the first time on a walk, he took my hand. He still hasn't talked, but he's making a move outward. This is an extreme case, but it happens every day. I see progress. This is wonderful and I feel I am helping in it."

Over half of the Volunteers also stated that they had feelings of satisfaction relating to themselves. They experienced a sense of accomplishment by being able to effectively carry out their jobs and projects, by simply being able to adjust to the VISTA life, and by being accepted by the clients. "Being invited into the house---it is a big privilege here," stated one of the Volunteers with considerable pride. The sense of being really accepted played a major role in the Volunteers' sense of accomplishment. Many Volunteers, for the first time, had left the adolescent culture and entered the adult world. The pleasure of finding that they could successfully function in this world was evident. Eric Ericson has called this phase of development the "phase of self-actualization."

This is how one of the Volunteers expressed this feeling of self-realization:

> "Having a girl say she would rather have me take her than another adult because 'you're more one of us,' having a youth call to ask me to spend Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon with him, those things indicate that I have started to make some inroads, and now I may be able to organize the teen community into a vocal group."

Another VISTA said:

> "Having little kids come up to you and say they like the study group and they'd like to come back next Thursday. Having clients concerned about you, like where you will spend Christmas."

Self- actualization was, however, not only related to the clients' acceptance. Another Volunteer expressed the feeling this way: "running my own show, doing my own kind of work." For others, the feeling was "a better understanding of myself," "gaining a sense of independence," and of "clarification of attitudes."

Balance of Satisfactions and Frustrations

The Volunteers were asked to consider on balance, whether the satisfactions they had experienced as VISTAS had far outweighed their frustrations and difficulties, were about equally balanced with their frustrations, or were fewer than their difficulties. Over half the Volunteers (54%) responded that their satisfactions far outweighed their frustrations; almost one-third (32%) felt that the satisfactions they had experienced had been about equally balanced with the frustrations; and only 14% felt that the difficulties were greater than the satisfactions. Taking everything into account, there is no question that at the four-month point, most of the Volunteers in our urban sample felt positively about their VISTA experience and were optimistic about greater satisfactions to come.

APPENDIX I

Distribution of 111 Columbia Trained VISTA Volunteers by State of Sponsoring Agency

California	4
Connecticut	4
Georgia	2
Illinois	5
Louisiana	3
Maryland	16
Massachusetts	4
Missouri	6
Nebraska	1
Nevada	1
New Hampshire	1
New Jersey	5
New York	13
Ohio	17
Pennsylvania	11
Texas	8
District of Columbia	5
Virgin Islands	5

APPENDIX II

VISTA Sponsoring Agencies, Type, Number of Volunteers and Training Cycle of Volunteers

Agency	Number of Volunteers	Training Cycle
1. Multi-facet Community Action Agency		
Community Progress, Inc., New Haven, Conn.	4	V
Mobilization For Youth, New York, N.Y.	6	III, VI
Baltimore Community Action Agency, Baltimore, Md.	4	V
Governor's Commission on Human Services, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands	5	V, VI
New Hampshire Office of Economic Opportunity, Manchester, N.H.	1	V
Economic Opportunity Development Corp. of Laredo and Webb County, Laredo, Tex.	1	VI
Mayor's Committee on Human Resources, Inc., (Lawrenceville Economic Action), Pittsburgh, Pa.	2	VII
Middlesex County Economic Opportunity Corp., New Brunswick, New Jersey	2	VII
Economic Opportunity of Atlanta, Atlanta, Ga.	2	VII
Total agencies: 9	27	
2. Settlement House or Federation of Settlements		
Grace Hill House, St. Louis, Mo.	5	IV
Marillac Social Center, Chicago, Ill.	1	VI
Friendship House, Washington, D.C.	1	VII
Greater Cleveland Neighborhood Centers Assoc. Cleveland, Ohio	4	III
Barney Neighborhood House, Washington, D.C.	4	VII
Hull House Association, Chicago, Ill.	4	VI
Bronx River Neighborhood Center, Bronx, N.Y.	1	V
Fuld House, Newark, N.J.	1	VII
Total agencies: 8	21	

Agency	Number of Volunteers	Training Cycle
3. Educational Institutions		
Cleveland Board of Education, Cleveland, Ohio	10	III
Operation Independence, Inc., Las Vegas, Nev.	1	VI
Baltimore Department of Education, Baltimore, Md.	3	VII
Total agencies: 3	14	
4. Community and/or Block Improvement Association		
New York Block Development Project, Inc., N.Y.	2	III, IV
Western Improvement Assoc. of Baltimore, Baltimore, Md.	2	IV, V
Newark Citizens for Community Development, Newark, N.J.	1	VI
Maryland University School of Social Work Neighborhood Project, Baltimore, Md.	2	IV
Northside Agencies for Community Development, St. Louis, Mo.	1	IV
Total agencies: 5	8	
5. Legal Aid/Bail Bond		
State Attorney's Office, Baltimore, Md.	3	III, V
Philadelphia Bar, Philadelphia, Pa.	3	IV
San Francisco Bar Assoc., San Francisco, Calif.	2	IV, VII
Total agencies: 3	8	
6. Health and Rehabilitation Service		
San Francisco Aid to Retarded Children, San Francisco, Calif.	1	III
Cleveland Society for the Blind, Cleveland, Ohio	1	IV
Lower East Side Information and Service Center for Narcotics Addiction, New York, N.Y.	1	V
Boston State Hospital, Boston, Mass.	4	VII
Total agencies: 4	7	

Agency	Number of Volunteers	Training Cycle
7. City-County Urban Renewal and/or Development Board		
Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency, Baltimore, Md.	2	V
New York Housing and Redevelopment Board, N.Y.	3	IV
Total agencies: 2	5	
8. Vocational and Job Training		
Opportunities Industrialization Center, Inc., Philadelphia, Pa.	5	IV, V
Work Adjustment Center, Philadelphia, Pa.	1	VI
Total agencies: 2	6	
9. Churches Religious Organizations		
Bethany Baptist Church, Newark, N.J.	1	VII
Holy Family Parish, Inc., Omaha, Neb.	1	VII
West Oakland Christian Parish, Oakland, Calif.	1	VII
Total agencies: 3	3	
10. City-County Welfare Department		
Division of Child Welfare of Cuyahoga County Welfare Department, Cleveland, Ohio	1	IV
Total agencies: 1	1	
11. Miscellaneous		
Social Welfare Planning Council, New Orleans, La.	3	III
Houston Council on Human Relations, Houston, Tex.	7	V
United Community Services Pilot Youth Program, Lorain, Ohio	1	VI
Total agencies: 3	11	

APPENDIX III

Agencies in Which VISTA Volunteers Comprise Total Staff Other Than Supervisor

Name of Agency	Number of Columbia Volunteers
Bethany Baptist Church	1
Governor's Commission on Human Services, Virgin Islands	3
Baltimore Bail Bond	3
Houston Council on Human Relations	7
Philadelphia Bail Bond	3
Lorain Pilot Youth Program	1
San Francisco Bar Association	2
University of Maryland Training Center VISTA Neighborhood Center	2
West Oakland Christian Parish	1
Western Improvement	2
Northside Agency for Community Development	1
Newark Citizens for Community Action	1
Total	27

APPENDIX IV

EVALUATION SECTION

VISTA ID#________ 1-3/

DIRECT SUPERVISOR ID#________ 4-6/

1. Do you think that the Volunteer's being here has made a difference in the lives of the people with whom he/she has worked? Please circle the point on the scale shown below which best represents this difference.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7/
very little difference			some difference			quite a lot of difference	

2. How well does the Volunteer get along with you; with other agency people; with clients; and with other VISTA's? Please circle the number under the appropriate headings below. (If your agency has no other VISTA's or agency staff other than yourself and the VISTA being rated, please circle the number 8.)

	HOW WELL VISTA RELATES						
PERSON	Very Well	Good	Average	Not Too Well	Poor	DNA	
clients	1	2	3	4	5	-	8/
other VISTA's	1	2	3	4	5	8	9/
agency staff	1	2	3	4	5	8	10/
supervisor	1	2	3	4	5	-	11/

EVALUATION SECTION
DIRECT SUPERVISOR

ID#________

3. Will you please rate the Volunteer with respect to the following skills and attributes. On the 7 point scale below, please circle the number which best represents the amount of the skill possessed by him/her. If you have not had an opportunity to judge the Volunteer with respect to any of the items below, please circle the option DNA (does not apply).

Point 1 = very little skill or ability

Point 7 = considerable skill, ability

1. Ability to meet and talk with strangers.

8 DNA   1 very little   2   3   4   5   6   7 considerable   12/

2. Ability to communicate in written form (reports, letters).

8 DNA   1 very little   2   3   4   5   6   7 considerable   13/

3. Ability to use telephone (on behalf of clients).

8 DNA   1 very little   2   3   4   5   6   7 considerable   14/

4. Ability to talk with client and discover problem (including help client to clarify problem).

8 DNA   1 very little   2   3   4   5   6   7 considerable   15/

5. Ability to follow through on a given task.

8 DNA   1 very little   2   3   4   5   6   7 considerable   16/

6. Ability to gather facts and make an appropriate plan of action.

8 DNA   1 very little   2   3   4   5   6   7 considerable   17/

7. Ability to effectively organize own work and schedule time.

8 DNA   1 very little   2   3   4   5   6   7 considerable   18/

EVALUATION SECTION
DIRECT SUPERVISOR

ID#________

8. Ability to organize and work with a group.

8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 19/
DNA very little considerable

9. Respect for agency rules (i.e., work habits, confidentiality, promptness, etc.)

8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 20/
DNA very little considerable

10. Ability to work with children.

8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 21/
DNA very little considerable

11. Ability to work with teen-agers.

8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 22/
DNA very little considerable

12. Ability to work with adults.

8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 23/
DNA very little considerable

13. Ability to work with Senior Citizens.

8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 24/
DNA very little considerable

14. Willingness to perform routine work if called upon.

8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 25/
DNA very little considerable

15. Ability to accept supervision.

8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 26/
DNA very little considerable

16. Resourcefulness in solving problems, working out ways of getting the job done.

8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 27/
DNA very little considerable

EVALUATION SECTION
DIRECT SUPERVISOR

ID#________

17. Ability to plan or develop a new program or new methods of giving service. 28/

8 DNA — 1 very little — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 considerable

18. Commitment to job and clients. 29/

8 DNA — 1 very little — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 considerable

19. Commitment to agency, its program and staff. 30/

8 DNA — 1 very little — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 considerable

20. Understanding of the purpose and philosophy of the agency. 31/

8 DNA — 1 very little — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 considerable

4. All in all, how do you evaluate the job competence of the Volunteer as demonstrated in his/her assignments to date? Please circle the appropriate number. 32/

Extremely competent - can be counted on to do an outstanding job	1
Very competent - does excellent work	2
Clearly adequate - not outstanding	3
Just adequate	4
Doubtful	5
Clearly unsatisfactory	6

EVALUATION SECTION
DIRECT SUPERVISOR

ID#________

5. People differ in the way they approach a job. On one hand there is the person who waits until a client comes in with a problem or until a supervisor assigns a job to do. On the other hand, there is the person who is constantly looking for things to do, seeking out needs. On the continuum below, where do you think the Volunteer belongs? Please circle the appropriate number.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 33/

passive - waits for job — active - seeks out job

6. People have varying degrees of dependency on their supervisors. Some people prefer to be told exactly what to do and to be constantly reassured and guided throughout a job. Others prefer to be self-motivating, allowed to figure things out for themselves and carry out the job with a minimum of supervision. On the Dependency-Independency continuum shown below, where do you think the Volunteer belongs?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 34/

needs constant guidance, supervision — independent, likes to be left alone except in trouble

7. The following personality traits are found to a greater or lesser degree in all VISTA Volunteers. Will you please indicate on the 7 point scales below the degree of each trait which you feel the Volunteer possesses. Traits are defined above each scale. Simply circle the point you feel is most representative of this VISTA Volunteer.

1. Flexibility - evidenced by ability to accept and adjust to new, rapidly changing or uncertain situations without undue strain.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 35/

very little — average — high degree

EVALUATION SECTION ID#________
DIRECT SUPERVISOR

2. Frustration Tolerance - evidenced by ability to accept rapid change, confusion, work pressure or frustration and still continue to work towards goal.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 36/
very little average high degree

3. Openness to New Ideas and People (Tolerance) - as evidenced by recognition of own prejudices and willingness to listen to ideas and work with people different than self without passing value judgments.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 37/
very little average high degree

4. Maturity - as evidenced by ability to assume responsibility for self and work, use self-discipline, carry out assigned task with minimum distraction.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 38/
very little average high degree

8. What is your overall evaluation of this VISTA Volunteer? Would you say he/she is:

superb, a rare Volunteer................................1 39/
very good, consistently effective and dependable........2
good, a solid Volunteer but without distinction.........3
fair, needs supervision to keep him effective...........4
poor, sometimes is more trouble than he/she is worth.....5

9. As of the present situation, do you think you would ask this VISTA Volunteer to stay another year?

yes....................1 40/
no.....................2
maybe, if improved.....3

APPENDIX V

SUMMARY OF VISTA VOLUNTEER COMMENTS ON DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EXPECTATIONS AND REALITY

Job Assignment	Number of Mentions
Expected to do more community organization; work less involving--less demanding	10
Volunteer less needed	8
Work too routine	3
Job very hard--less evidence of success	3
Job more positive, exciting, satisfying than expected	7
TOTAL	31

Agency and Supervision	
Enjoys more independence than expected, less close supervision	8
Better treated, treated as professional	4
Agency less structured, more progressive	4
Better rapport with supervisor	2
Volunteer has to be more a part of the agency	3
Agency more bureaucratic, Volunteer has less influence	3
Agency too political, interferes with job	1
Volunteer not accepted by agency staff, not treated as well	3
Supervision too formal, limiting, binding	2
TOTAL	30

Relationships with Clients	Number of Mentions
Deeper, more contact than expected	4
Less direct relationship	3
Not accepted or needed by poor or neighborhood; apathy	4
Clients just different than previously visualized	3
TOTAL	14
Reactions to Poverty and War on Poverty	
Problems involved in War on Poverty greater than anticipated--impressed by totality of poverty	5
Not working with poor or in real slum neighborhood	4
Disillusionment about VISTA and War on Poverty	1
Politics of poverty not as serious as problem as anticipated	1
TOTAL	11
Placement	
Disappointment in placement--expected to be placed elsewhere--not matched to training; generalized, etc.	7
Area more rural	2
Life in big city, new part of country different than expected	4
TOTAL	13
Living Conditions	
More favorable	6
Less favorable	1
Expected to live in neighborhood in which work	2
TOTAL	9

APPENDIX VI

TABLE 54 -- Relative Importance of Aspects of VISTA Role as Perceived By Volunteers By Training Cycles

Item	Respondents Considering "Items of Major Importance"										Total Per cent	Rank Order of Importance
	III		IV		V		VI		VII			
	%	Rank Order	%	Rank Order	%	Rank Order	%	Rank Order	%	Rank Order		
1. Activating poor to take advantage of services.	81.0	2	91.3	1	89.3	1	93.8	2	100.0	1	91.0	1
2. Increasing the VISTAS' own knowledge.	85.7	1	91.3	1	85.7	2	100.0	1	87.0	2	89.2	2
3. Bringing specific services.	81.0	2	73.9	3	82.1	3	93.8	2	87.0	2	83.0	3
4. Informing neighborhood about what agency is trying to do.	57.1	5	78.2	2	64.3	5	87.5	3	78.3	3	72.1	4
5. Organizing poor to change power structure.	57.1	3	65.2	4	67.9	4	75.0	4	78.3	3	68.5	5
6. Improving techniques and services of agency.	52.4	4	73.9	3	53.6	6	68.8	5	73.9	4	63.9	6
7. Letting people know there is a VISTA.	19.1	6	13.0	5	28.6	7	25.0	7	17.4	5	20.7	7
8. Improving morals of the poor.	23.8	7	8.7	6	10.7	8	26.7	6	4.4	6	13.5	8